The American Publishers to the Reader.

In presenting to the Catholics of America CHEAP and UNIFORM EDITIONS of FATHER FABER'S Popular Devotional Works, the Publishers feel great pleasure in calling attention to the following Cards from the distinguished author, and to the Approbation of the Most Rev. Archbishop of Baltimore:

FATHER FABER, *to the Catholics of America.*

"The Author is under great obligations to MESSRS. MURPHY & Co., of Baltimore, in being able to bring out his Books and present them to his Catholic Brethren in America, under their auspices, through their well-known and careful press. The kind indulgence and favorable reception which "*All for Jesus*" and "*Growth in Holiness,*" met with in America, made it a matter of no slight consequence to the Author that he should find publishers, whose name and standing would be a guarantee to him both against unauthorized alterations of his text and also against errors of the press, which are the more serious when the works in which they occur abound in theological expressions. Under these circumstances, and considering the grave character of anything like inaccurate statement in matters of doctrine, the author trusts he may be allowed to say that *no editions of his Works but those issued by* MESSRS. MURPHY & CO. *have any sanction from him, or are in any way submitted to his corrections and revision.* F. W. FABER."

"THE ORATORY, London, June 21, 1855."

"My dear Messrs. Murphy & Co.—It would be a great satisfaction to me if you would make known, in any way which seems best to you, to my American readers, that the more I feel the kind reception which my works have met with in the United States, *the more anxious I am that my readers should know that* YOU ALONE *are authorized by me to* PUBLISH MY WORKS, *or receive from me any corrections.* The theological character of my works makes me very anxious that this should be known; and, moreover, the expense to which you have gone so liberally, in order to ensure the advance sheets, demands the publication of this fact in justice to yourselves. Very truly, yours,

"THE ORATORY, London, July 19, 1855. F. W. FABER."

Approbation of the Most Rev. Archbishop of Baltimore.

Having learned that the Rev. FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER, D.D., has authorized Messrs. John Murphy & Co. to republish his works, I cordially approve their republication, they being full of instruction and calculated to promote piety. His recent work, styled "The Blessed Sacrament, or the Works and Ways of God," is, I doubt not, highly suited for this purpose.

Given at Baltimore, this 4th day of June, 1855.

† FRANCIS PATRICK, *Archbishop of Baltimore.*

MURPHY & CO., *Publishers,* 178 Market street, Baltimore.

ALL FOR JESUS:

OR,

The Easy Ways of Divine Love.

BY

FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER,

Priest of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri.

Τοὺς σοὺς ἀφελεῖς
Παίδας ἄγειρον,
Αἰνεῖν ἁγίως,
Ὑμνεῖν ἀδόλως,
Ἀκάκοις στόμασιν,
Παίδων ἡγήτορα Χριστόν.
CLEMENS. ALEX.

FIFTH AMERICAN EDITION.

Published with the Sanction and Corrections of the Author.

BALTIMORE:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN MURPHY & CO.
178 MARKET STREET.
PITTSBURG:—GEORGE QUIGLEY.
Sold by Catholic Booksellers generally.
1855.

We approve highly of the republication of the work styled "All for Jesus," by the Rev. F. W. Faber, which has been received so favorably by the Catholics of England.

✠ FRANCIS PATRICK,

Archbishop of Baltimore.

Baltimore, 20 *January,* 1854.

TO THE

Frequenters of the Oratory

OF ST. PHILIP NERI,

IN KING WILLIAM STREET, CHARING CROSS, LONDON.

My dear Friends and Benefactors,

I venture to dedicate this little Book to you, for more reasons than one. I would have it stand as a memorial of my gratitude for all the affectionate intercourse which you have permitted to exist between the sons of St. Philip and yourselves; an intercourse which has been bound up with the dearest, because the most sacred, interests of your lives. For four years and more you have made our cause your own, and have rejoiced in our successes, and been anxious in our anxieties, as if they had been yours; while on our side, your griefs and cares, your sorrows and trials, you well know, have been taken upon ourselves, according to the poor measure of our love, and lightened, so far as heart can lighten heart in Christ.

Sacraments, and prayer, and the daily word of God, have formed the triple cord which has bound us together, until we have almost come to think and feel, to sorrow and rejoice, to hope and fear alike, in the one heavenly heart of our common father, St. Philip. We have all along known that this could be only for a season. Like the apostle of the Gentiles at Rome, we were but as prisoners in a hired house, and our blessed Lord in His great Sacrament humbled, not beyond the depth of His condescension, but beyond the patience of our love. But the circumstances of this immense city do not leave to Catholic communities full liberty to select their own abode or His. Many efforts were made for as much as two years to find a home for our saint near the field of his first labours; and when, after repeated failure and inquiry, they seemed all but successful, they came to nought, we must believe, by the Will of God: and we have been borne away to another region of this peopled wilderness.

Thus there is another motive for my dedicating this little book to you. It is, so far as many of you are concerned, a leave-taking; and I

would have it, not merely a token of our mutual love, but also the odour of Christ and the virtue of His blessing. You will find in its pages many things which have been said to you so often, that you have smiled at their repetition. You will read here the sweet thoughts and words about Jesus and Mary, which we have stolen from the saints, and meditated on together. There is many a line will be as old to you as the burden of a favourite song, or the tune of an Oratory hymn. In after times, if these things are worth remembering, they will bring back to you the home-like, familiar aspect of the work-worn chapel, with its crowded altar, and its rampart of confessionals round about our Lord and His little Sion, with its gay shrine of our Immaculate Mother, its pale-faced St. Philip with the Infant Saviour, and its life-like Crucifix, that was hardly ever without a kneeler at its feet. Words and expressions, anecdotes and texts, will one day have a value both to you and me, because of the remembrances they will awaken in our souls: and God perhaps may mercifully allow the heat and life of grace to linger about them, and touch us with unworldly love. I could say much more; for gratitude has a faithful memory and a fluent tongue: yet more might seem but like self-praise, and to you who know us is not needed.

We have learned to love Jesus together. We have taught each other, helped each other. Every month that went by, every feast, novena, octave, triduo, with its lectures, prayers, and hymns, little by little quickened our love of our sweet Lord. So let us pray for each other now, that through all changes and all separations we may keep fast to Him; and that what we have tried to be in the dear old Oratory, we may become, here and hereafter, more and more completely,—All for Jesus, who is Himself our All!

FRED. W. FABER,
CONG. ORAT.

Feast of St. Anthony of Padua,
1853.

Preface.

In offering this little treatise to the public, two things alone seem to call for explanation. 1. I speak continually of the Confraternity of the Precious Blood. This is because the work was intended as a sort of spiritual manual for the members, not because it is not equally suited for all devout Catholics. 2. While I trust to the charity of my readers to interpret me in all doubtful or obscure passages, as meaning only what approved writers mean, I would especially guard myself against one misapprehension. It may be said, "All these practices and devotions have to do with mere Affective Love, not Effective;" and it may therefore be supposed that I would have people stop at the one without going on to the other. Of course, the perfection of love is to be effective, and effective love consists only in self-abnegation. There is no high sanctity short of this. But it is not the subject I am treating of. I am not putting forward what is perfect, but what is easy. I am not trying to guide souls in high spirituality; God forbid I should be so foolish or so vain! As a son of St. Philip I have especially to do with the world, and with people living in the world and trying to be good there, and to sanctify themselves in ordinary vocations. It is to such I speak; and I am putting before them, not high things, but things which are at once attractive as devotions, and also tend to raise their fervour, to quicken their love, and to increase their sensible sweetness in practical religion and its duties. I want to make piety bright and happy to those who need such helps, as I do myself. I have not ventured to aim higher. If it causes one heart to love our dearest Lord a trifle more warmly, God will have blessed both the work and its writer far above their deservings.

St. Mary's, Sydenham Hill,
St. Philip Neri's Day, 1853.

Preface to the Second Edition.

A LARGE edition of the book having sold off in about a month from its first publication, I have taken considerable pains in preparing this second edition, and I have endeavoured to guide myself in doing so by the valuable criticism with which I have been favoured. In thanking both friends and strangers for them, I wish most particularly to acknowledge my obligations to the Bishop of Birmingham for his great kindness to me in this respect. May I venture to use this opportunity to thank him for the same considerate kindness, I had better say indulgence, on other occasions also, when he has turned from his multifarious apostolic toils, to mingle with discerning criticism and wise suggestion such words of affectionate encouragement as he well knew a convert author might require, and whose full value to cheer him, as well as to keep him humble, a convert more than others would sensitively appreciate? In again trusting my little work to the Catholics of England and Ireland, I wish I could say how much I have been affected by the reception it has met with, not as if it reflected credit on myself, but because it has shown that the Name of Jesus could not be uttered without the echo coming, and that to speak of Him, however poorly, was to rouse, to soothe, and to win the heart; and it was more grateful to me than any praise, to feel that my subject was my success.

The Oratory, King William Street,
Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, 1853.

Table of Contents.

CHAPTER I.

THE INTERESTS OF JESUS.

PAGE

Jesus all for us—and all for love—His interests the object of the Confraternity of the Precious Blood—men's interests—the devil's interests—the interests of Jesus in 1. the Church triumphant—2. the Church suffering—3. the Church militant—the four chief ones—1. the glory of His Father—2. the fruit of His Passion—3. the honour of His Mother—4. the esteem of grace—do not follow the same rule as the interests of the world—not to look for visible results—prayer the chief way of forwarding them . . . 13

CHAPTER II.

SYMPATHY WITH JESUS.

Service of love—sympathy with Jesus a mark of a saint—three instincts of saints—1. eagerness for the glory of God—2. touchiness about the interests of Jesus—3. anxiety for the salvation of souls—story of St. Giacinta Mariscotti—example of the three instincts in a Spanish Jesuit—the six advantages of giving away our indulgences to the souls in purgatory 41

CHAPTER III.

LOVE WOUNDED BY SIN.

PAGE

God our Father as well as our Creator—this brings us to love of complacency—and so to love of condolence—sorrow for other men's sins—various revelations to the saints about this—special office of nuns—examples of the saints—methods of practising this sorrow—1. meditation on God's glory—2. St. Bernard's way—3. way of Balthasar Alvarez and St. Alphonso—how the three instincts are satisfied in this devotion—St. Paphnutius and the piper—Lancisius on the Carnival—St. Gertrude's vision—the plain English of the lives of most Catholics—God's homeless glory 69

CHAPTER IV.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

What goes to the saving of a soul—what is involved in a soul being saved—the mystery of prayer—St. Gertrude's vision of the Ave Maria—the three instincts applied to the practice of intercessory prayer—for whom we should intercede—1. for those in mortal sin—2. for the lukewarm—3. for the saints on earth—4. for those in tribulation—5. for our benefactors—6. for those aiming at perfection—7. for the increase of the accidental glory of the blessed—8. for the rich and noble—the time, place, and method of intercession—joy and freedom from vain-glory the fruits of intercessory prayer, ... 110

CHAPTER V.

THE RICHES OF OUR POVERTY.

Our distress because we love God so little—the ways in which He helps us to love Him—more especially in the way of intercession—the riches He gives us to offer to Him—1. the Sacred Humanity of Jesus—2. the intercessory use of the Passion—various exam-

PAGE

ples of the saints—3. our B. Lady—nature of devotion to her—devotion to her Seven Joys—4. the angels—5. all things that are or have been on earth—6. God's own Perfections—fitness of this devotion for invalids 148

CHAPTER VI.

MINTING MONEY.

God the centre of every thing—so-called pillars of the Church—nature and grace—oblation of our actions in union with those of Christ—minting money—the spirit of oblation—1. the oblation of our ordinary actions—methods and practices—difference between canonized and uncanonized writers—St. Gertrude's oblations—2. oblation of recreations—hints to valetudinarians—St. Charles' game of chess—Noe's ark—3. oblation of solitude—4. rising to God by common sights and sounds—examples and practices—Peter Faber's three methods of prayer—multiplicity of mental devotions—vocal prayer—dry devotion not solid—5. ejaculatory prayer—Father Baker—how to say office—6. oblation of sufferings—what it is to be allowed to please God—God begging glory of His own creatures. 181

CHAPTER VII.

THANKSGIVING.

Neglect of thanksgiving—spirit of the Eucharist—faults of good people—dry people ordinarily self-righteous—fatherly providence—a spirit of thanksgiving the characteristic of the saints—devotion to the Eternal Word—practices—Jewish tradition from Philo—Heads of thanksgiving—1. Common blessings—2. personal blessings—3. afflictions—4. trifling blessings—5. miscellaneous blessings—6. For irrational creatures—7. Blessings of our enemies—the French Apostolate of prayer—8. For angels and saints—9. for supernaturalness of the Church, and the gift of faith—St. Jane Frances de Chantal—10. For mass—materials for thanksgiving after mass and communion—our own practice hitherto—spiritual benefits of thanksgiving—application of it to the three instincts 230

CHAPTER VIII.

PRAISE AND DESIRE.

PAGE

Science and grace—Tarry-at-Home travelling—what praise and desire are—Loves of Complacency and Benevolence—value of interior acts—description of God—meditation on the attributes of God—application of Praise and Desire to the three instincts—how we get at the love of complacency—Saints made up of six things—the HOLY MIDDLE CLASS of the Church—Examples—1. From the Raccolta—2. Lancisius' devotions to Jesus Risen—3. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi's preparation for Whitsuntide—4. renewal of vows and heroic desires—regimental holiness—liberty of spirit—St. Gertrude, and the old Benedictine ascetics—the great wonder that God loves men—the greater that He lets men love Him—the greatest that they will not do so—the spirit of reparation—Mary the Christian's Benedicite—the praise of the Sacred Heart—God's praise of Himself 299

CHAPTER IX.

PURGATORY.

Thoughts on hell—Rosignoli—the world of sense and the world of spirit—communion of the saints—two views of purgatory—synopsis of the treatise of St. Catherine of Genoa—what the two views agree in—lessons learned, for our own good, and for the good of the Holy Souls—Pleas for this devotion—1. All devotions centre in it—2. It implies all the works of mercy—3. An exercise of the three theological virtues—4. Its effects upon the spiritual life—the ways of practising it—story of Marie Denise de Martignat—the sorrows of kind hearts—God's description of Himself as a poor invalid—the doctrinal character and fulness of their devotion—sweet song of the Sacred Heart 367

Letter to the Confraternity, ... 425

All for Jesus.

CHAPTER I.

The Interests of Jesus.

JESUS belongs to us. He vouchsafes to put Himself at our disposal. He communicates to us every thing of His which we are capable of receiving. He loves us with a love which no words can tell, nay, above all our thought and imagination; and He condescends to desire, with a longing which is equally indescribable, that we should love Him, with a fervent and entire love. His merits may be called ours as well as His. His satisfactions are not so much His treasures as they are ours. His sacraments are but so many ways which His love has designed to communicate Him to our souls. Wherever we turn in the church of God, there is Jesus. He is the beginning, middle, and end of every thing to us. He is our help in penance, our consolation

in grief, our support in trial. There is nothing good, nothing holy, nothing beautiful, nothing joyous, which He is not to His servants. No one need be poor, because, if he chooses, he can have Jesus for his own property and possession. No one need be downcast, for Jesus is the joy of heaven, and it is His joy to enter into sorrowful hearts. We can exaggerate about many things; but we can never exaggerate our obligations to Jesus, or the compassionate abundance of the love of Jesus to us. All our lives long we might talk of Jesus, and yet we should never come to an end of the sweet things that are to be said about Him. Eternity will not be long enough to learn all He is, or to praise Him for all He has done; but then that matters not; for we shall be always with Him, and we desire nothing more.

He has kept nothing back from us. There is not a faculty of His Human Soul which has not had to do with our salvation. There is not one limb of His Sacred Body which has not suffered for us. There is not one pain, one shame, one indignity, which He has not drained to its last dreg of bitterness on our behalf. There is not one drop of His most Precious Blood which He has not shed for us; nor is there one beating of His Sacred Heart which is not an act of love to us. We read wonderful things in the Lives of the Saints about their love of God, wonderful things which we dare not think of imitating. They practised fearful austerities, or they spent years in unbroken silence, or they were ever in ecstasies and raptures, or they were passionately in love with contempt and suffering, or they pined and wasted away in holy impatience for death, or they courted death, and expired in the long

tortures of an excruciating martyrdom. Each one of these things separately fills us with wonder. Yet, put them all together, conceive all the love of Peter, Paul, and John, of Joseph and of Magdalen, of all the apostles and martyrs, the confessors and virgins of the Church in all ages, thrown into one heart made, by miracle, strong enough to hold such love; then add to it all the burning love which the nine choirs of multitudinous angels have for God, and crown it all with the amazing love of the Immaculate Heart of our dear Mother; and still it comes not near to, nay, it is but a poor imitation of, the love which Jesus has for each one of us, however lowly and unworthy and sinful we may be! We know our own unworthiness. We hate ourselves for our own past sins. We are impatient with our own secret meanness, irritability, and wretchedness. We are tired with our own badness and littleness. Yet, for all that, He loves us with this unutterable love, and is ready, if need be, as He revealed to one of His servants, to come down from heaven to be crucified over again for each one of us.

The wonder is not merely that He should love us so much, but that He should love us at all. Considering who He is, and what we are, have we any one single claim to His love, except the excess and, without Him, the hopelessness of our misery? We have no claims upon Him, but those which He Himself in His compassion has invented for us. What can be more unlovely than we are, what more ungenerous, what more ungrateful? And yet He loves us with this excess of love! Oh, how is it we can ever turn ourselves away from this one idea! How is it we can take an interest in any thing but this surpassing love of God for His

fallen creatures! It is almost surprising how we can bear to go through our ordinary duties, or how it is that, like men in love with created loves, we do not forget to eat and drink and sleep, feeling ourselves every hour of the day and night the object of the most profuse tenderness and the most unutterable abundance of the love of God, the Almighty, the All Wise, the All Holy, the All Beautiful, the Everlasting! Oh most incredible of startling wonders! Blessings are heaped upon us till we are almost out of breath with them. Graces are multiplied upon graces till they get beyond our power of reckoning. His compassions are new every morning. And then, after all, there is yet to come the recompense which eye has never seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived! This is His side of the question.

Alas! for our dearest Lord! Up to this day, what have we done for Him? And see what he has done for us; and the end of His doing it all was to gain our love! We look upon a crucifix, and it hardly moves us. We hear of His bitter Passion, but our eyes are dry, and our hearts indifferent. We kneel down to pray, but we can hardly keep our thoughts fixed upon Him for a quarter of an hour together. We go into His own most holy presence, and we hardly bend the knee before the Tabernacle, lest it should spoil our clothes. We see others sin, and what matter is it to us that Jesus is offended, so long as it is not we who are risking our souls by offending him? Oh, these are strange signs of love! Surely Jesus cannot be much to us, if this is the way we feel about Him. Yet so it is. We go our own way, and do our own will. The great thing is to please ourselves, and to

make things easy to us. Life must be taught to run smooth. As to penance, it must be kept at arm's length. We must have bodily comforts and worldly conveniences, and our spiritual life must be nothing but a sufficiency of those inward consolations, without which our souls give us pain, because they are not at rest. If we worship God, it is for self; if we do good to others, it is self we are seeking, even in our charity. Poor Jesus Christ! as St. Alphonso used to say, poor Jesus Christ! Who thinks of Him? who weds His interests?

Yet this is the very object of our Confraternity of the Precious Blood—to look after the interests of Jesus, and to forward them in every way we can. There is hardly any worldly object of importance which has not got some association to defend its rights and to forward its interests; why should not the interests of Jesus have one also? Science has its meetings, and its corresponding societies. Men band together in order to gain the victory for some favourite political opinions. They make companies for railways and for steam-packets and for coal-mines. Why should not we open an office to transact the affairs of Jesus, to protect His rights, and advance His interests? Now remember! this is just the business of the Confraternity of the Precious Blood. When we join it, we must leave self at the door. There is no self in it. It is all for Jesus. It is the office of the interests of Jesus.

Now, let us try to get an idea of the interests of Jesus; else, how shall we be able to do any thing to advance them? Men cannot work in the dark; they must know what they are about. You know what it

is to have an interest. If you look over the world, you will see that everybody has some interest at heart, and is working hard for it. There are almost as many interests in the world as there are men. Every one you meet in the streets is going after something. You see it in his face, his quick eye, and his rapid walk. Either it is political, or literary, or mercantile, or scientific, or fashionable, or simply ambitious, or dishonest. Still, whatever it is, every man has wedded the interest of his choice, and is doing his duty to it. He works hard for it all day; he goes to bed with the thought of it, and he wakes with it in the morning. Even on Sunday, it is rather his hand that is resting, than his head or his heart: they are full of his interest. Look what men will do, singly, or banded, to put down slavery, or to get free trade, or to compete for a large order, or to carry the mails, or to make new railroads. It is plain men have interests enough in the world, that they love them dearly, and work for them manfully. Oh that it were all for God, the good, the merciful, the eternal God!

The devil also has his interests in the world. He has been allowed to set up a kingdom in opposition to God, and, like all sovereigns, he has a multitude of interests. Thus he has agents everywhere, active, diligent, unseen spirits, swarming in the streets of the cities, to push on his interests. They canvass the labourers in the field. They see what they can do with the monk in his cloister and the hermit in his cell. Even in the churches, during Mass or Benediction, they are hard at work, plying their unholy trade. Our fellow-men also, by thousands, let themselves out to him as agents; nay, numbers work in his

interests for nothing; and, what is more shocking still, many do his work, and almost fancy it is God's work they are doing, it looks so good and blameless in their eyes. How many Catholics oppose good things, or criticise good persons; yet they would never consent to be the devil's agents, if they really knew what they were about. These interests of the devil are very various. To cause mortal sin, to persuade to venial sin, to hinder grace, to prevent contrition, to keep back from sacraments, to promote lukewarmness, to bring holy people and bishops and religious orders into disrepute, and to stand in the way of vocations, to spread gossip, to distract people at prayer, to make men fall in love with the frivolities and fashions of the world, to get men to spend money on comforts, furniture, jewels, nicknacks, parrots, old china, fine dress, instead of on the poor of Jesus Christ, to induce Catholics to worship great people and put their trust in princes, and fawn upon political parties in power, to make them full of criticism of each other, and quick as children to take scandal, to diminish devotion to our Blessed Lady, and to make people fancy divine love is an enthusiasm and an indiscretion: these are the chief interests of the devil. It is amazing with what energy he works at them, and with what consummate craft and dreadful ability he advances them in the world. It would be a thing to admire, if it did not make us afraid for our own souls, and if all things which are against God were not simply abominable, and to be hated. The dark enemy of the Creator is mysteriously allowed a marvellous share of success in that creation which the All Holy once looked down upon, and blessed in His unspeakable complacency. Men's in-

terests put the interests of Jesus on one side, partly as troublesome, more often as insignificant. The devil's interests are directly opposed to those of Jesus, and where they are successful, either debase them, or kill them altogether.

Now, let us look at the interests of Jesus. Let us take a view of the whole Church, which is His Spouse. Look first into heaven, the Church triumphant. It is the interest of Jesus that the glory of the most Holy Trinity should be increased in every possible manner, and at every hour of night and day; and this glory, which is called God's accidental glory, is increased by every good work, word, and thought, every correspondence to grace, every resistance to temptation, every act of worship, every sacrament rightly administered or humbly received, every act of homage and love to Mary, every invocation of the saints, every bead of the Rosary, every sign of the Cross, every drop of holy water, every pain patiently endured, every harsh judgment meekly borne, every good wish, though it end only with the wishing, and never sees fulfilment—provided there be a devout intention along with all these things, and they are done in union with the merits of our sweet Lord. Every hour, at least so we trust, a new soul lands in heaven from Purgatory or from earth, and begins its eternity of rapture and of praise. Each soul that swells the throng of worshippers, each silent voice added to the angelic choirs, is an increase to the glory of God; and so it is the interest of Jesus to make these arrivals more frequent, and that they should bring more merits and higher degrees of love with them when they come. Even in heaven the Confraternity has work to do, and power to do it.

Heaven is one of our offices, and there is much business to be despatched in its beautiful courts, business for the interests of Jesus, business which He has at heart, and, therefore, which it behooves us to have in hand.

Next, look at that vast kingdom of Purgatory, with its empress-mother, Mary. All those countless throngs of souls are the dear and faithful spouses of Jesus. Yet in what a strange abandonment of supernatural suffering has His love left them! He longs for their deliverance; He yearns for them to be transferred from that land, perpetually overclouded with pain, to the bright sunshine of their heavenly home. Yet He has tied His own hands, or nearly so. He gives them no more grace; He allows them no more time for penance; He prevents them from meriting; nay, some have thought they could not pray. How then stands the case with the souls in the suffering Church? Why, it is a thing to be meditated on when we have said it—they depend almost more on earth than they do on heaven, almost more on us than on Him; so He has willed it on whom all depend, and without whom there is no dependence. It is clear then that Jesus has His interests there. He wants His captives released. Those whom he has redeemed He now bids us redeem, us whom, if there be life at all in us, He has already Himself redeemed. Every satisfaction offered up to God for these suffering souls, every oblation of the Precious Blood to the Eternal Father, every Mass heard, every communion received, every voluntary penance undergone: the scourge, the hair-shirt, the prickly chain, every indulgence gained, every jubilee whose conditions we have fulfilled, every De Pro-

fundis whispered, every little alms doled out to the poor who are poorer than ourselves, and, if they be offered for the intention of these dear prisoners, the interests of Jesus are hourly forwarded in Mary's kingdom of Purgatory. This is another office of the Confraternity, and there is no fear of overworking the glorious secretary of that wide realm, the blessed Michael, Mary's subject. See how men work at the pumps on ship-board when they are fighting for their lives with an ugly leak. Oh that we had the charity so to work, with the sweet instrumentality of indulgence, for the holy souls in Purgatory! The infinite satisfactions of Jesus are at our command, and Mary's sorrows, and the Martyr's pangs, and the Confessor's weary perseverance in well-doing. Jesus will not help Himself here; because He loves to see us helping Him, and because He thinks our love will rejoice that He still leaves us something we can do for Him. There have been saints who have devoted their whole lives to this one work, mining in Purgatory: and to those who reflect in faith, it does not seem, after all, so strange. It is a foolish comparison, simply because it is so much below the mark, but on all principles of reckoning, it is a much less work to have won the battle of Waterloo, or to have invented the steam-engine, than to have freed one soul from Purgatory; and I should be slow to think there was a single member of the Confraternity who had not done more than that already.

Now look at the Church militant on earth. The interests of Jesus are rich and plentiful enough here. There are things to be done, and things to be left undone. Hearts to be persuaded, and hearts to be

dissuaded. There is so much to do, the puzzle is where to begin, and what to do first. Men who do not love Jesus are to be made to love Him, and men who love Him to love Him a great deal more. Each of us might take one department, and we should find more work to be done in it than we can get through in our best of times. There are so many people in their agony, and dying every minute, all over the world. Oh, in what danger the very dearest interests of Jesus are at their dying beds! Satan is hard at work; temptations thicker than flakes in a snow-storm; and whoso wins this battle, Jesus or the devil, is so far conqueror for ever; for there is no fighting it over again. There are Catholics who have not been near the sacraments for years, and there are saints whose half-century of merits and heroic love is positively in peril of being lost; they only want one thing, and let them suffer ever so much they cannot merit it, and that is, final perseverance. There are heretics who never suspected they were in heresy, and heretics in bad faith, who have told falsehoods about the Church, and have run down the Mother of God. There are Jews descended from those who crucified our Lord, and there are Mohammedans who are the masters of Jerusalem. There are Hottentots who worship loathsome images, and there are American Indians who have no higher thought than to hunt for all eternity, their merits proportioned to the number of their murders. There are men whom the unthawing snows whiten, and men whom the fierce heats of the south scorch, on the mountain tops, in the deep valleys, in the city and in the wilderness, on the land and on the sea, in the dungeon and in the palace; all dying, many a minute,

in the most frightful unpreparedness that can be conceived; and Jesus died for every one of them, as exclusively as if there had been nobody else to die for, and He is ready this moment to come down and die for each one again, if it were needed. Go all through His long Passion, mark His steps, His tears, His drops of blood; count the thorns, the blows, the spittings, the falls; fathom the interior depths of the shame and shrinking, the torture and the sickness of His Sacred Heart; and it was all for that poor Indian, dying far away this hour beneath the shadow of the Andes; and if he dies and is not saved, it will have been in vain. This is but one department of the interests of Jesus, men in their last agony; and St. Camillus was raised up to found an Order expressly for them. What might I not say of souls in mortal sin, of heretics and infidels, of criminals in prison, of persons under calumny, of others in scruples or temptations? I should never have done if I described all the interests of Jesus upon earth.

As, however, I have mentioned the dying, and the dangers of the death-bed, as the object of a special devotion, it will not be out of place to remind you that Pius VII. attached indulgences to the recital of three Paters and Aves for the dying, in honour of the Agony of Jesus, which will be found in the Raccolta. Many saints and holy persons have had this special devotion for souls in their agony. In the life of one of the first mothers of the Visitation we read that, as she was watching before the Blessed Sacrament during the night of Holy Thursday, 1644, she saw a vision of our Lord in His agony, and with this vision there was given her a light and an efficacious grace to pray for the

intentions of persons in their agony. "Alas!" she said, "the agonies of poor creatures are strange hours," and, in truth, that moment, decisive of eternity, is the only important affair we have to transact. From the hour she received this admirable grace, she often seemed to hear the sighs of dying persons; and the effect this had upon her was so great, that ever afterward she said, night and morning, the prayers of the Church for those in their agony. She often meditated on the words which our Lord said of Himself a little before His death, "The prince of this world is come, and finds nothing in Me," as if all life was to be so directed as to enable us to make these words in some measure our own when we come to die. Of the same religious we are told, in another place, that when the Bishop of Geneva came, on St. Jerome's day, to consecrate the Church of the order at Annecy, and the superioress wished one of the six chapels to be dedicated to St. Joseph, this good sister begged her to let it be dedicated to St. Joseph dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary. "Ah! my good mother!" she cried, "God has made known to me that, by this devotion to St. Joseph Dying, His goodness wills to give many graces to persons in their agony, and that, as St. Joseph did not go to heaven at once, Jesus not having yet opened it, but that he descended to the limbus of the fathers, it is a most efficacious devotion for the agonizing, and for the souls in purgatory, to offer to God the resignation of the great St. Joseph in dying and leaving Jesus and Mary, and to honour the holy patience of his tranquil expectation, till the dawn of Easter, when the Risen Jesus set him free." So much for this devotion; but, I repeat, I should never have

done if I described all the interests of Jesus upon earth.

There is not a public-house or a gin-palace, not a threatre or a casino, not a ball-room or a concert, not a public meeting or a parliament, not a shop or a wharf, not a fair, a race-course, or a market, not a carriage or a ship, not a school or a church, where His interests are not in danger at all hours, and where He is not calling on us to help Him. This is the fighting part of the Church; no wonder there is so much to do, and so little time to do it in. There is not a thing which has not two sides, and one side belongs to Jesus, and the other side is against Him. The devil has other interests besides sheer sin. He can fight against Jesus with low views almost as successfully as with mortal sins. The slow poison of souls sometimes does his work better than the quick. See, then, the multiplicity, the ubiquity, the urgency, of the interests of Jesus; and it is to meet all this that we are members of the Confraternity.

Yet although it is impossible to go through all the interests of Jesus on earth with any thing like minuteness, it is necessary to have somewhat more of a clear and definite view about them; in order that we may understand our office and work as members of the Confraternity. If we study the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as He has revealed it to us in the Gospel, in the history of the Church, in the lives of His saints, and as we have found it ourselves in prayer, we shall see that the multitudinous and manifold interests of our most dear Lord may be gathered up into four classes; and a short sketch of these classes will put us in possession of that clear view of our work which we are seeking

after. The first interests of Jesus are, of course, in our own souls. The kingdom of heaven is within us. Yet, all important as it is, the question of our own holiness is not, at least directly, the one we are concerned with just at present. Without personal holiness we shall do nothing; but this is not the time or place to speak of that. The four great interests of Jesus to which I am now alluding are, 1, The glory of His Father, 2, The fruit of His Passion, 3, The honour of His Mother, and 4, The esteem of grace. Let me say a word on each of these.

1. The glory of His Father. When we study our Blessed Lord as He is represented to us in the Gospels, nothing, if we may venture to use such an expression, seems so like a ruling passion in Him as His longing for His Father's glory. From the time when at the age of twelve He left Mary, and stayed behind in Jerusalem, to His very last word upon the Cross, this devotion to the glory of God comes up at every turn. As it is said of Him on one occasion that the zeal for God's house ate Him up, so may we say that He was eaten up continually with hungering and thirsting after His Father's glory. It was as if God's glory had been lost upon the earth, and He was come to seek it and to find it, and how was His Sacred Heart straitened until He did find it! Thus was He our example! for this end does He give us grace, that we may glorify our Father who is in Heaven. Now, who can look into the world, and not see how God's glory is lost upon the earth? It is the interest of Jesus that we should seek and find it. Apart from clear acts of great and grievous sin, how is God forgotten, clean forgotten, by the greatest part of mankind! They live as if there were no God.

It is not as if they openly rebelled against Him. They pass Him over and ignore Him. He is an inconvenience in His own world, an impertinence in His own creation. So He has been quietly set on one side, as if He were an idol out of fashion, and in the way. Men of science and politicians have agreed on this, and men of business and wealth think it altogether the most decent thing, to be silent about God; for it is difficult to speak of Him, or have a view of Him, without allowing too much to Him. Here is a desperate, if it were not for grace we should say altogether desperate, obstacle to the interests of Jesus, this great huge impenetrable mass of forgetfulness of God, of ignoring of God. Oh, how it turns our hearts sick, and makes us long for death; for what can we do in so hopeless an affair as this? Yet we must try. A string of beads and a blessed medal! There is no saying what they cannot do! And a single Mass, is its power far short of infinite?

Then unfortunately there are a great many religious people who by no means give God's glory its fitting place; many, called spiritual, who give Him but the second best of every thing. They want light to know God's glory when they see it. They want discernment to detect the world and the devil under the show of reason and moderation, whereby they would defraud Him of his glory. They want bravery to set the world's opinion at defiance, and consistency to make their lives all of a piece with their religion. Good souls! they are the very pestilence of the Church, and yet they never for one moment suspect it; and it is very much for the interests of Jesus that they should see themselves, and other things as well, in their true

light. So here also we have some work to do, to pray that all good men, and men trying to be good, should be able to see what is for God's glory and what is not. Oh, what ground we lose every day for the want of this discernment!

Then, there are religious orders, set apart with the blessing of the Church, each in its own particular way, to work out this glory of God. There are bishops and priests, all supposed to be toiling with a single aim and an exclusive perfection for this one thing. There are guilds and confraternities without number, and is not this their end? Calamities have to be endured, dangers faced, scandals exposed, the Church has to knock under to the world to-day, and to rough-ride it to-morrow; and Jesus has interests in all these things; and it is our work to help Him. Half-a-dozen men, going about God's world, seeking nothing but God's glory,—they would remove mountains. This was promised to faith; why should not we be the men to do it?

2. The fruit of His Passion. This is the second great interest of Jesus. Every sin we can prevent, no matter how venial, is a great thing for the interests of Jesus. We can see how great a thing it is, if we remember that if we could shut hell for ever, save all the souls that are in it, empty purgatory, and make all the men and women on earth persevering saints, equal to St. Peter and St. Paul, by telling one little, and such a little! lie, we might not do so on any account; for God's glory would suffer more by that little lie, than it would gain by all the rest. What a work then will it be for the interests of Jesus to prevent one mortal sin! Yet how easy! If every night, before we go to sleep, we begged our dear Lady to offer up to God the Precious Blood of

her dear Son for grace to hinder one mortal sin, somewhere in the world, during that night, and then renewed the same offering in the morning for the hours of daylight, surely such an offering, and by such hands, could not fail to win the grace desired; and then each one of us might probably hinder seven hundred and thirty mortal sins every year; and if a thousand of us made these offerings, and persevered in them for twenty years, why, it would give none of us any trouble, and to say nothing of the merit we should gain, here would be more than fourteen million mortal sins prevented; and if all the members of the Confraternity did it, you would have to multiply it again by ten. Ah! at this rate the interests of Jesus would prosper, and how happy, how immensely happy should we be!

So, again, every time we get any one to go to confession who stands in need of it, even though it be only to confess venial sins, we increase the fruit of our beloved Redeemer's Passion. Every act of contrition we persuade men to make, or by prayer obtain them the grace to make, increases the blessed fruit. Every additional strictness or trifling penance, of which we are the promoters, answers the same good end: and so do all our efforts to advance frequent communion. When we get people to join in devotions to our Lord's Passion, or to read about it, and meditate upon it, we are forwarding the interests of Jesus. Some one said, if my memory does not fail me, it was Albertus Magnus, that one tear shed over the sufferings of our dear Lord was worth more than a year's fast on bread and water; what then if we get others to weep with us in our tenderness for the Passion of Jesus! What a great deal a little prayer will do! Sweet Jesus! why are we so

hard and cold? Oh, kindle in us the sweet fire which Thou camest to kindle on the earth!

3. The honour of His Mother. This is another chief interest of Jesus, and the whole history of the Church shows how near it lies to His Sacred Heart. It was the love of her that specially drew Him down from heaven, and it was she who merited the time of the Incarnation. She was the chosen one of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity, the elected daughter of the Father, the predestinated Mother of the Son, and the chosen Spouse of the Holy Ghost. The right doctrine of Jesus has in all ages been wrapped up with the true devotion to Mary; and the Mother can be wounded only through the Son. Thus Mary is the heritage of humble and obedient Catholics. As devotion to her increases, so does holiness increase. The saints are moulded on the love of her. Sin has no greater enemy than Mary, for the thought of her is a charm against it, and the devils tremble at her name. No one can love the Son, but the love of the Mother grows in Him also; no one can love the Mother, without his heart melting with tenderness toward the Son. Thus has Jesus put her in the front of His Church, that she should be the token of all good, and the stumbling-block of His enemies. What wonder then that His interests are deeply concerned with her honour. Every heretical blasphemy against her dignity, for which you make reparation by an act of love, or an act of thanksgiving for her Immaculate Conception and her Perpetual Virginity, gives you an opportunity of advancing the interests of Jesus. Every thing you can do to spread devotion to her, and especially to make Catholics feel more tenderly toward her, is a distinct work for Jesus, and one which He will

most lovingly repay. To get people to go to communion on her feasts, to be enrolled in her Confraternities, to have a picture of her, to gain indulgences for the souls in purgatory that in lifetime were most devoted to her, to pray for the speedy definition of her Immaculate Conception, to say one-third of the Rosary every day,—everybody has an opportunity of doing one or the other of these things, and they are all for the interests of Jesus. Ah! there is one devotion I will mention! I wish we were all inspired with it. We should do well then for the interests of Jesus, and our dear Lord would get such abundance of new love all the world over! It is,—to have more confidence in our Blessed Mother's prayers, more undoubting trust, more bold petition, more real faith in her. There would be more love for Mary, if there were more faith in Mary. But we are in an heretical country; and it is hard to live among the icebergs, and not be cold. O Jesus! animate our confidence in Mary, not only that we may work more for Thy sweet interests, but that we may work in the way Thou wouldst have us work, letting no creature be dearer to us than the one who was dearer to Thee than all other creatures put together!

4. The esteem of grace. This is another of the chief interests of Jesus. The world would be quite a different place if men only valued grace at its proper value. What is there in the world worth any thing except grace? Oh, how childishly we let ourselves be run away with by all manner of follies, which have nothing to do with the interests of Jesus. How stupid it is of us! What time we waste! What harm we do! What good we leave undone! And how sweetly patient Jesus is with us all through it! If people esteemed

grace rightly, every one of the other interests of Jesus would go right. When they go wrong, it is just for the want of this esteem. Graces keep coming; merits keep multiplying; almost as fast as the blessed beatings of the Sacred Heart. Meanwhile, all the time that Heart is yearning over us with enraptured love, we are saying, I am not obliged to do this; I need not forego this pleasure; I must keep down religious enthusiasm. God help us! I wish we could get a peep of any enthusiasm there is to keep down! Poor Jesus Christ! Poor Jesus Christ! And all this is for want of a true esteem of grace. Better die than forfeit one increase of grace; do we all believe this? No! but we say we believe it. If the funds were to fall to fifty to-morrow, it would be of less consequence than that a sick Irishman in an obscure court should by impatience forfeit one degree of grace. To receive (this is what theologians tell us) all the natural gifts and ornaments of St. Michael, his power, strength, wisdom, beauty, and all the rest, would be nothing compared with one additional degree of grace, such as we get a score of if we resist an angry feeling for a quarter of an hour; for grace is a participation of the Divine Nature. Oh, do we carry this out in our own lives, while we are going to persuade others to carry it out? Fix upon any evil or calamity of the Church you please, and I am ready to show you it would never have taken place, if her children had had a true esteem of grace; and moreover, that it would be set right by to-morrow morning, if they all took up with a true esteem of grace. To gain the whole world will be no profit to a man if he suffer detriment, any detriment, to his immortal soul. Go and persuade people of this; show

them what store they should set by grace, and how one grace brings another along with it, and how all these things are merits, and how all merits turn to glories, glories which are eternal in the heavens. Ah! you will indeed forward our dear Lord's interests if you do this: you will forward them far more than you have any idea of. Only pray that men may have a truer esteem of grace, and you will be a secret apostle of Jesus. All graces are in Him; He is the fountain and the fulness of them all; He longs to pour them out over dear souls, souls that He died for; and they will not let Him; because they must esteem the graces they have, in order to gain new ones. Go and help Jesus. Why should a single soul be lost, for which He died? I say, why should *one* be lost? It is a horrible thing to think of a lost soul, most horrible. And why should they be lost? why? There is Precious Blood to be had for the asking; and what it gives is grace. But men do not care about grace. St. Paul spent his whole life teaching people about grace, and praying for grace for them, and that they might use grace rightly when they had got it. When the Fountain of all grace is springing up like a living well of joy in the heart after Communion, ask Him to open all men's eyes to the beauty of His grace, and so will you cause His grace to multiply, and with the multiplication of grace His interests to prosper; for thus stands the case with our dear Lord, that the more He gives away, the richer He becomes. Dear King of souls! how is it we can think of any thing but Him? To think that *we* should be allowed to take His interests in hand: it is amazing! I wonder it does not send us into an ecstasy. But we do not know our own privileges; and why not? Because we

do not study our dearest Lord enough. Why not begin in time what we shall be delighted to do for all eternity? Study Jesus. Heaven is only heaven, because Jesus is there; and I do not understand why earth has not become heaven already, since Jesus is on earth also. Ah! it is, alas! because we have the wretched power to offend Him left us. Take that away, and there is heaven at once, or purgatory, which is the porch of Heaven. Will the day really come when we can sin no more, no more wound the Heart of Jesus? O blessed Lord! let the sun rise soon that is not to set till that dear privilege is ours. Why fret and question if it is to be heaven at once, or purgatory first? what matter? The great thing is not to be able, for we should be sure to do it if we were able, ever to offend our dearest Lord and Love again.

These are the interests of Jesus, to forward which is the great work of our Confraternity. Or rather, these are samples and specimens of those interests. It may seem strange that our Blessed Lord should make use of such poor and vile instruments as we are for so great a work; but it is the same Lord who called simple fishermen from mending their nets, to be His apostles, and to convert the world. True it is we have sins enough of our own to look after, that we have imperfections enough to turn away the Heart of our heavenly Spouse from us, and that there is no place in the whole world that we know of, where the interests of Jesus are in so much danger as they are in our own souls. Yet even we must be apostles; wo unto us if we are not apostles! We must be serving the souls of others, even while we have so much to do for our own. The Gospel is a law of love, and the Christian life is a life

of prayer. As the apostle tells us, we must make intercession for all sorts of men. Indeed, we shall never prosper with the work in our own souls, if we do not strive to advance the interests of Jesus in the souls of others. Many persons complain that they make no way in religion, and that they do not get on with the mortification of their evil passions, their sinful infirmities, and their tiresome self-love. They are just where they were a year ago, and that is disheartening. This often comes to pass, because they are selfish, because they only care to stand by themselves. They do not think they have any thing to do with the souls of others, or with the interests of Jesus, or with intercessory prayer; and so they keep on a low level, because they do nothing to merit higher graces. The Confraternity expects other things of us, and teaches us very differently.

But it is important to remember that the interests of Jesus do not follow the same rule as the interests of the world. If we were not to remember this, we should soon be disheartened at the little good we seem to be doing. The interests of Jesus are for the most part invisible interests. We must take the power of prayer on faith. We shall never know till the last day all the answers there have been to our prayers, nor how they have told upon the Church for hundreds and hundreds of years. Look, for example, at St. Stephen's prayer, when he was stoned to death. It obtained the conversion of St. Paul, who was holding the clothes of Stephen's murderers. Only think of all St. Paul has done, and continues to do daily, and will go on doing till the end of the world; and all he does St. Stephen does also, for it is all St. Stephen's prayer. So, perhaps,

somebody asks the prayers of the Confraternity that obstacles to his vocation to the religious life or the ecclesiastical state may be removed, and it is granted some Friday evening to our prayers. He becomes a priest: he saves hundreds of souls; these souls save others, some by becoming priests themselves, some by becoming nuns, some by becoming holy fathers and mothers in the world; and so the prayer goes on spreading and spreading, and may very likely be found actually at work in the dead of that night when all the earth will be awakened to see our Lord coming in the east.

Thus you must not look too much to visible fruits and to public results. What the world calls misfortunes often turn out to be the good fortune of Jesus. For instance, a man is suffering a great injustice because he happens to be a Catholic. You pray for him. The injustice goes on; the Protestants outwardly have the best of it, and are as cruel and triumphant as ever. You fancy your prayer has not been answered. There could not be a greater mistake. Jesus wants to make that man a saint. It is better for him to be the helpless victim of that injustice. Meanwhile, because of your prayers, Jesus has granted him additional grace, which he has corresponded to. So that, actually, for your Pater and Ave he will be higher in heaven to all eternity than he would have been. There will be a gem sparkling in his crown that would not else have been there; you will see it and admire it in heaven, and you will know it was your Pater and Ave that put it there. So it is with the Pope, and the Church, and religious orders, and in fact every thing that has to do with Jesus. His interests do not follow the rules of the

world, but the rules of grace. We must measure them by different measures, and not use the measures of the world. Our measures, weights, and coinage must all be of the sanctuary. Jesus was never so triumphant as when He let Himself be nailed to the Cross; yet the silly world thought it had it all its own way then, and had carried the day completely. It is of importance that you should bear this in mind. It is of faith that God always answers right prayers, and in a way and to a degree beyond our most enthusiastic expectations; but He does not yet let us see how. We must take it on faith. We are quite sure that in the long run we shall not be disappointed.

We must still say a few words on the way in which it belongs to us to advance the interests of Jesus. There are many ways of doing this: good example, preaching, writing books, lending good books, arguing gently with people and persuading them, using your influence where you have any, and exercising your authority, as parents, and teachers, and masters. All these ways are good; and if we truly love Jesus, we shall never neglect any one of them, according as opportunity presents, and in keeping with the modest propriety of our condition and place in life. Members of the Confraternity may and should use these means as they can. But the way, the real way, of the Confraternity is one way, and only one. It is prayer.

People pray very little now-a-days. Indeed it is sad to see how little faith men put in prayer. They think they are to do every thing by their own cleverness, or by bustle, fidget, and activity. They think the same things which made England a great proud country will suit the interests of Jesus, and advance

His kingdom upon earth. Every thing in these days goes by sight, not by faith. If Catholics undertake any thing, and little seems to come of it, they are cast down, and think it has come to nought. A mission is given, one soul is saved, or one sin prevented; it was a fortnight's work, and it cost ten pounds one way or another. What a failure! Yet to hinder that one sin from soiling His Father's glory, Jesus is ready to come down and be crucified again! If we cannot publish figures, and show great results, as if we were so many Protestant members of a Bible Society, who have sent out, say a million bibles to China, and need not add the fact of the Chinese ladies of a whole province having made them into slippers, if we cannot satisfy the world, or what is called the English public, that we are doing a great work even in its discerning eyes, we all set to work to criticise each other, and sin; we have public meetings, and sin; we gossip, and sin; we form angry committees, and sin; we break up the work, and sin; and then everybody writes a letter to the newspapers, and, as likely as not, sins again; and after that we go on as before. We have tried to do a good work; and because we tried on natural principles, it has ended in a number of additional sins. All this is for want of prayer, and for want of faith in the power of prayer. So remember—the Confraternity knows nothing of any way but prayer. We may be sure, that, in an unbelieving age and country, simple-hearted prayer will have great power with God, and an especial reward. They who remembered Sion, when others were forgetting her, were wonderfully remembered by the Lord: so let us pray in a nation that is forgetting prayer, and is trusting in itself, and leaning on an arm

of flesh, and God will be with us as He has never been before, and the interests of Jesus will prosper on the earth. Oh the interests of Jesus! Would to God they burned at our hearts all the day long! Life is short, and we have much to do, but prayer is mighty, and love stronger than death, and so let us all set to work, with singing and with joy, angels and men, sinners and saints, for the interests, the dear interests, the sole interests, of Jesus!

CHAPTER II.

Sympathy with Jesus.

WHEN Jacob in his exile dwelt with Laban, he fell in love with Rachel, Laban's daughter, and he said to her father, "I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy youngest daughter:" and the Holy Scripture adds, "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed but a few days, for the greatness of his love." Now, do we not often find life long, and our days to pass heavily? Is not perseverance a weary thing, and does not duty many a time turn out irksome and uninteresting? There is such a thing as wishing life over because of a holy impatience whereby we desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Sin, and the power of sinning, and the chance of sinning, become intolerable to us, and we pine to be with God, as one pines for his absent love. But this is not what I mean. Life, and especially our spiritual life, often drags on heavily for very different reasons. It is weary work to be always fighting with our evil passions, and disheartening work to make so little way. Temptations tease us, and scruples worry us;

and to be dead, buried, and safe in purgatory, seems the limit to our peevish ambition. And why is this? Because we do not serve Jesus for love. If we did, it would be with us as it was with Jacob. Years would seem but days, for the greatness of our love. Now let us see if it is, after all, so impossible for us to serve our dear Lord out of love.

We have laid it down as a rule, that the business of our Confraternity is to further the interests of Jesus, and that the especial way to further them is by prayer. Now, the very fact that we have chosen prayer as our especial way shows us something more. It is possible to serve God, and so to do something for the interests of Jesus, in a stiff, dry, awkward way; just as we can do another a favour ungracefully, and as if it was an annoyance, only we cannot very well help ourselves. But it is not possible to serve God by prayer, or to advance the interests of Jesus by prayer, in this dry and unaffectionate way. Prayer with no heart in it is not prayer at all; it is either irreverence or distraction. Thus, you see, the Confraternity binds us in a sort of way to serve Jesus out of love; and as we are very fond of our Confraternity, and wish it to prosper, this is another reason why we should see whether we cannot serve Jesus out of love. Oh, if only one of you could be persuaded to do this, what joy would there be in heaven, what delight to Mary, what consolation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus! One more soul in the world that is serving Him for love! Dear Lord! it is worth a thousand years of penance to obtain for him this consolation! The coloured sunsets and the starry heavens, the beautiful mountains and the shining seas, the fragrant woods and the painted flowers, they are

not half so beautiful as a soul that is serving Jesus out of love, in the wear and tear of common, unpoetic life.

Every one would wish to be a Saint. This surely is true. They would wish to love God as much as the Saints did, and to have always that abounding and overflowing joy which the Saints always had, and to go straight to heaven without any delay in purgatory, and to be high up in heaven because of their exceeding love. We may know that we are very far indeed from being Saints, and we may fear there is very little chance of our ever becoming Saints. We may have no heart for their great austerities and bodily mortifications, no courage for their valiant detachment from the world, no supernatural appetite for crosses and sufferings such as they had. Still, for all this, who would not wish to be a Saint, if he could?

Now I am not going to bring before you any very hard duties, much less any severe austerities. I do not want to drive you beyond your grace; but I wish you to observe this. Look at all the Saints in all ages, no matter what their history may be, or their lot in life. You will find, when you compare them one with another, that it was not their austerities that made them Saints. They differ very much from one another; yet after all they are very like. Some have worked miracles all their lives long, like St. Joseph of Cupertino, the Franciscan; and some hardly worked any at all, as was the case with St. Vincent of Paul; and as to St. John the Baptist, of whom our Lord said such marvellous things, he never worked a single miracle. Some Saints have practised dreadful austerities, like St. Rose of Lima; others have contented themselves

with taking God's will as it came in their way, and mortified their wills; this was the case with St. Francis of Sales. But whether they did miracles or not, whether they practised bodily penances in excess or not, still they have a peculiar character of their own. They have certain tastes and inclinations, by which we could always know them if we met them. And the delightful thing is, that their chief peculiarities as Saints lie close to our own doors; and we can make them our own without wonderful miracles or frighten ing penances.

I do not mean to say we can easily be equal to the Saints. No! no! but what I say is, that the ways in which they loved God and served the interests of Jesus, and the tastes which made them so dear to the Sacred Heart, are quite easily in our power, if we choose to adopt them. Nay, they will be ours at once, if we are only fervent members of the Confraternity. In a word, while the Saints differ in almost every thing else, there are three things in which they all agree; and these are, 1. Eagerness for the glory of God; 2. Touchiness about the interests of Jesus; and 3. Anxiety for the salvation of souls.

But, before I say something about each of these three things, I must prevent your misunderstanding me. I should not wish any thing I have said to make any one of you despair of being Saints before you die. However little the chance may be, I should not like to have hindered a Saint; it would be any thing but advancing the dear interests of Jesus, which is the sole object of this little treatise. So you must let me tell you something of one of the Saints, St. Giacinta Mariscotti, who was canonized by Pius VII. in 1807. She was an

Italian lady, and her distinguishing characteristic as a girl was a great love of fine clothes and gay ornaments. Her father and mother sent her to a convent to be educated; but all the time she was there she would occupy herself with nothing but the foolish frivolities of the world. All her girlhood passed away in dissipation. Then she wanted to get married, and because her sister made a good match, and she none, she was filled with spite and envy. Her temper was completely soured, and she became so disagreeable that people could not bear to go near her.

Her father foolishly, or worse than foolishly, wished her to become a nun: and although she felt no vocation at all, she thought she might as well do that as any thing else; and so she entered a convent of the third order of St. Francis in Viterbo. Neither her taste nor her character changed; the convent seems to have been as lax as lax could be, and she did just what she pleased. Good St. Alphonso used to say that it was easier for a soul to be saved in the gayeties of the world, than in a relaxed religious order; and few men have had such experience of those matters as he.

The first thing our Saint did was, out of her own money, to build a grand room for herself. She furnished it in first-rate style, and decorated it, her biographer says, quite sumptuously. She neglected the rule; and such parts of it as she chose to keep, she kept, as may be supposed, in a very lukewarm and unsatisfactory way. She became more and more eaten up with vanity, and thought of nothing but herself all the day long. Queer training for a saint! In this way she lived nearly ten years. God then sent her a severe illness. She called for the Franciscan monk,

who was the confessor of the convent; but when he beheld the magnificent furniture of her room he refused to hear her confession, and told her paradise was never meant for such as she was. "What," she cried, "and shall I not be saved?" He told her the only chance was to beg pardon of God, to repair the scandal she had given, and to begin a new life. She burst into tears, and descending to the refectory, where all the nuns were assembled at the time, she prostrated herself before them, and begged forgiveness for the scandal she had given.

Yet for all this, no great change, or at least, no heroic change, took place. She did not give up her fine things to the superioress; but she gradually, quite gradually, improved in her way of life. Again and again it was necessary for God to send her illnesses, that she might at length give herself wholly up to grace; and at last, remorse of conscience succeeded in its work by gentle pertinacity, sank deeper and deeper, till it lost itself in love, and she became a Saint.

Now this is a consoling history. We are too apt to think that Saints are people who have been extraordinary from their cradle upward, who, by special grace, have never lost their baptismal innocence, and have hardly felt the rebellion of evil passions, and certainly have not known the worst of all struggles, the fight with old sinful habits. Or if this be not the case, then we think of them as persons in whose behalf God has interfered in an extraordinary way, as in the conversion of St. Paul, and of St. Ignatius. And so we think it is out of all question our becoming Saints. But this story of St. Giacinta gives us quite a different view; years of lukewarmness, venial sin, and unworthy vani-

ty are succeeded by a half-and-half conversion, followed up by some other little conversions afterward, just as it may have been with so many of us.

See how this history illustrates an excellent and consoling remark of Father Baker's. (Sancta Sophia. i. 175.) "However, as for souls that for external respects have embraced a religious life, let them not, therefore, in a desperate humour, conclude that no good can come to them by it so unworthily undertaken; but rather hope that, by a special providence of God, they were even against their own intentions and wills brought into a course of life, to which if, however, afterward they will duly correspond, it will prove an infinite blessing unto them. For such ofttimes have proved great saints, after that God gave them light to see their perverse intentions, and grace to rectify them: by which means they, *beginning in the flesh, have ended in the spirit.*" In religious houses, or in the ecclesiastical state, or even in a devout life in the world, how many of us may take heart from these words, and this example, to make a fresh beginning, even though we may have begun and begun a score of times already! All we want now is the likeness of St. Giacinta's later years.

And how shall we reach to Giacinta's later years quietly and easily? Why, by cultivating the three characteristics of the saints mentioned before, eagerness for the glory of God, touchiness about the interests of Jesus, and anxiety for the salvation of souls; for in these three things sympathy with Jesus consists, and sympathy is at once the fruit and food of love, and love is sanctity, and a saint is simply one who loves

Jesus above the common run of pious men, and has had unusual gifts given him in return.

1. Eagerness for the glory of God. It is the first and fundamental truth of religion, that we are here in the world for no other end than to glorify God by the salvation of our souls. This is our single purpose, our one work: all else is beside the mark. All other creatures either help us or hinder us in this one work, and must be dealt with accordingly. From this first principle, and by the two precepts of love of God and love of our neighbour, we reach the duty of seeking the glory of God in the salvation of our neighbour's soul as well as of our own. Now, it is plain that if we love God we shall be eager for His glory, and the more we love Him the more eager we shall be. What we have set our hearts upon we are sure to follow out hotly and perseveringly. When, then, a man comes to love God devoutly, he becomes what we call a man of one idea. He looks at every thing in one point of view. He considers trades and professions as so many necessary evils, as distracting him from his one work. He is seeking everywhere and in every thing the glory of God. It is his last thought at night, his first on waking. If he obtains any power, authority, or influence, his first impulse is, How shall I use this to the glory of God? If a calamity befalls him, this is the first question he asks of himself. If a sum of money is left him, this is the first idea it suggests to his mind. He interests himself about the Church and the poor, about education and crime, because these matters are full to overflowing of God's glory. For instance, a man of the world looks at the immense system of railways and steam navigation, which now covers the

earth as with a net. He calculates its probable effect on governments, popular rights, science, literature, commerce, civilization. The problem fascinates him. The man of God looks on the same thing, and thinks how it will forward missionary enterprise, how it will bring Catholics together, how it will facilitate communication with the Holy See, which is the freedom of the Church, and how in these, and many like ways, God will have glory out of it all. When a man's mind is engrossed in politics, whether in the government or in the opposition, every thing that happens comes before him simply with reference to his one absorbing interest. The state of the crops, the chance of a bad harvest, our foreign relations, internal discontent, strikes of workmen, papal bulls—his view of them is, how will they affect the political party with which I am acting? So it is with the man who loves God. His one view of every thing, however unlikely, has to do with the glory of God. I do not mean to say that he is always thinking of it with an actual and present intention. That would be almost impossible, almost beyond the condition of man. But I mean that it is his most frequent thought, and that he recurs to it ever and again, as a man does to something he loves affectionately, and desires intensely.

Now this is not very hard. There is no austerity in it. We can begin it quietly, take it easily at first, and then let it grow upon us, just as habits will grow. We might make a little prayer to God every morning for love to seek His glory, and for light to find it all day long. We might renew our intention twice a day to seek His glory. We might ask it in communion, and at the end of our rosaries, and in our examen of

conscience. If we often forget it, never mind; it will come by use; and God Himself will begin to help us wonderfully, when we have persevered for a few months in the practice. But not before, remember; for this is His way, to wait awhile, and see if we persevere, though He is really helping us all the time, or else we never could persevere; only He will help us in another way later on. This is not hard; yet it would bring us up many miles nearer the saints, and oh what interests of Jesus would it not advance, by the time a year was gone round!

2. Touchiness about the interests of Jesus. I use this word purposely, because it so exactly expresses my meaning, and I do not know any other word which expresses it so well. We know perfectly what it is to be touchy about our own interests, or the interests of those who are near and dear to us. We fire up at the hint or suspicion of an attack. We are always on the look out with a watchful jealousy, as if everybody we met had a design upon us. We are quick to complain, and quick to discern. Sometimes, if we do not take care, we judge others censoriously, or we lose our temper and speak rudely. Now apply all this to the interests of Jesus, and you will get a very fair idea of what it is to be a saint. Yet even good people do not understand it, and condemn it as extravagance and indiscretion; simply because they do not know what it is to serve God with a service of love. A man who is thus touchy about the interests of Jesus, hears of some scandal, and it makes him perfectly miserable. He broods over it, day and night; he talks querulously about it; it takes the sunshine out of his life for the time being. His friends cannot conceive why he should

make so much of it, or take it so to heart. It is no affair of his, and there is no blame attaching to him in the matter. They are ready to accuse him of affectation; but they do not see that all his love is for Jesus, and that it is positive pain to him that his dear Lord's interests should be injured. They could fret for a month over being vexatiously entangled in a spiteful and unjust lawsuit; but what is that to the least hinderance thrown in the way of the interests of Jesus? Surely a man who does not see this can hardly be a Christian.

Another way in which this touchiness about the interests of Jesus is shown, is in the delicate perception and keen abomination of heresy and false doctrine. The purity of the true faith is one of the very dearest interests of Jesus; and, consequently, one who truly loves his Lord and Master is pained beyond the power of words by the expression of false doctrine, especially among Catholics. Opinions about our Lord's ignorance, or in depreciation of His grace, or in derogation of His Mother's honour, or lowering the sacraments, or dishonouring ever so little the prerogatives of His Vicar upon earth—these things, merely in passing conversation, sting him so that he feels even bodily suffering from them. Unreflecting people are almost scandalized at this; yet if they heard the honour or chastity of their mother or sister called in question with coarse or wanton rudeness, there is hardly any violence short of bloodshed which would not be thought warrantable and creditable. Yet what is my mother's honour to the dignity of Jesus, or my sister's good name to the least tittle of our Blessed Lady's majesty? and is there not to me more of the mother's love, and of the sister's

affection, in the See of Peter, than in all my flesh-and-blood relations put together? I should not be bound to die, to seal with my blood my conviction of my mother's honour; but I should be a wretch if I shrank from dying for the lawful honour of the Holy See. Thus you will not find a single saint who has not cherished this pain of love in his heart of hearts, this inability to endure the sound of heresy or false doctrine; and where this is not, then, as sure as the sun is in the heavens, the love of Jesus is but poor and weak in the heart of man.

The same touchiness may be shown, as occasion requires, about all the interests of Jesus mentioned in the last chapter. One remark, however, must be made. It will often happen when a man's love of our Lord is beyond the formed habits of virtue he may have at the moment, that he is indiscreet, or impatient, or rude, or bitter. He suspects where there is no ground for suspicion, and he does not bear with the slowness or coldness of others, as he would do if the habit of charity were more perfectly formed in him. This often brings discredit on devotion; for there are no persons judged with more unfeeling rigour than those who make profession of a devout life. But they must have their faults and imperfections; they must have the less lovely stages of the spiritual life to pass through; and it must be their consolation that many a time when men blame them, Jesus does not: and the very imperfections of their young love are dear to Him, while the sage criticism and pompous moderation of their censors are hateful in His eyes.

Now, it would not be hard to cultivate this touchiness about the interests of Jesus; and yet it is one of

the chief instincts of the saints. Is it not worth while trying? Can there be a pleasure in life so great as loving Jesus and serving Him for love? We may begin to-day: there is no hardship in it; no sudden or violent change which we need to make in our lives; we have only got to think a little more about love, and to ask for more love, and then we are fairly on the road. Without any tie or obligation, the Confraternity enables us to start at once.

3. Anxiety for the salvation of souls. This is the third and last instinct of the saints which puts us in sympathy with Jesus. The world and the material interests of the world are all against us. They carry us away. What we see is so much more impressive than what we believe. Yet Jesus came into the world for the saving of souls; He died for them; He shed His Precious Blood for them. In proportion as souls are saved His interests prosper; in proportion as they are lost, His interests as the Saviour of souls are injured. The soul is the only thing worth caring for. Only think what it is to be lost, lost eternally! Who can fathom the horror of it? Who can rightly picture to himself the utterness of the ruin, the breadth of the wretchedness, the unendurableness of the torture, the helpless wildness of the despair? Yet St. Theresa saw the souls of men flocking daily through the doors of hell, like the showers of dry leaves which the wind drives about in autumn. And Jesus hung His three hours upon the Cross for every one of those lost souls! And they might all have been now gleaming bright and beautiful in the courts of heaven! And they loved us, perhaps, and we loved them, and there was much to love in them! Generous, kind, unselfish, they once were; but

they loved the world, and were ruled by their own passions, and, though they hardly thought of it, they crucified our Lord afresh. And now they are lost—lost eternally!

What wonder His servants should yearn for those over whom Jesus yearned himself! Thus it is they are always alert about missions, schools, religious orders, retreats, indulgences, and jubilees. They are full of plans, or, if not of plans, at least of prayers. They care for little else but souls. They sacrifice all for souls. No matter what rebuffs they meet with, what disappointments they find, or into what mistakes they fall at first. They are all for souls. They begin afresh every day to plan and plot for souls. They are not cast down because they do not see clearly there will be money or men to go on with all the good works they plan; but their consolation is, that all work for souls is complete work by itself, and for as long as it lasts; because all dispensing of grace and of the Precious Blood is a desirable and blessed thing in itself. Hence, the Church, the mother of souls, encourages the temporary stimulants of retreats, missions, and jubilees; because all these things are complete by themselves and for the time. While some talk and take views, and criticise, and despond, and weaken the hands and hearts of others, those who love Jesus work on in simplicity, not thinking of the morrow.

Volumes might be written about this passion for souls. It must come where there is a true love of Jesus. It is not the rule for Peter only, but for all who love. When thou art converted, confirm thy brethren, and, Lovest thou Me more than these? Feed my sheep. And have not we, each of us, many little ways by

which we can help in the saving of souls? And in intercession, at least, is not the whole Church open to the genial and immense influence of our prayers, as much as it is to the Pope himself?

The saints, then, are made up chiefly of these three things:—Eagerness for the glory of God,—touchiness about the interests of Jesus,—and anxiety for the salvation of souls. These three things make a most beautiful and angelic character, and go further than any thing else to assure us of our predestination. They are the three things which the Confraternity helps to form in us. Yet we have seen how easy they are, if only we will learn to love Jesus, and to serve Him for love. There is neither sex, nor age, nor station which is not equally convenient for the practice of these three things. And what a difference it would make in the world if a few people would take them up seriously and carry them out quietly in daily life and in daily prayer.

When a man dies in England, his friends often say of him, in praise of his diligence, energy, and concentration: Well, he lived simply to carry through that important line of railway; or—his only object was to extort from the government a more scientific education for the people; or—he devoted himself to the cause of Free-trade; or—he was a martyr to his exertions in behalf of Protection. It was his one idea; it grew with his growth; he could think of nothing else; he spared neither time nor expense to advance ever so little his favourite cause, and the interest which he had wedded; it was his monomania. He did his work in his day, and he did it well, because he was heart and soul in it; and the world is in debt to him for it. Now, why should it not be said of us:—Well, he is gone; he was a man

of one idea; he cared for nothing but that God's kingdom should come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. He was eaten up with this; waking or sleeping, it was always upon him; nothing daunted him; he spared neither time nor expense for his hobby; and when neither time nor money were at his disposal, he besieged heaven with prayers. He took no interest in any thing else; it was meat and drink to him, and it quite mastered him; and now he is gone. Yes! he is gone; but whereas the other man left behind him his railway and his cheap bread, our friend has taken all his love, and pains, and prayers, away with him to the judgment-seat of Jesus; and what they have done for him there eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor man's heart conceived.

Now, do think of these three things, these easy instincts of the saints, this serving Jesus out of love. Would you like to see how they work in a good man's heart, even in very little matters? There was an old Spanish Jesuit, who could not for the life of him make up his mind whether it was better to gain an indulgence for the soul in purgatory that was most neglected and forgotten, or for the soul that was nearest to its release and entrance into glory. There was a puzzle; both were sweet acts of charity, but which was the sweetest? which would Jesus most approve? He was such a kind-hearted man, that good father, that he inclined very much to the poor, neglected soul, just because it was so neglected; it went to his heart to pass over that forgotten soul. But at last he decided in favour of the other; and now see the reasons. Although it seems the greater mercy to offer it for the other soul, because it is most in want, seeing that it is in greater misery;

notwithstanding, charity is a greater virtue than mercy, and it is a greater act of charity to offer the indulgence for the soul that was most just and loved God most, looking simply to the greater glory of the Divine Majesty as the Creator of that soul; for it is nearest to its entry into heaven, where it will at once begin to glorify God immensely by its praises and its bliss. Here was eagerness for the glory of God. Again, the soul is not properly the full conquest of Jesus till it is safely landed in heaven, and our dear Redeemer presents it to the Eternal Father as a trophy of His Sacred Passion; and was it not better to keep the poor, neglected soul waiting in purgatory than to keep Jesus waiting in heaven? and besides, all this sadness about passing over the forgotten soul, would it not make Jesus smile and something would be done for that poor soul? Here was touchiness about the interests of Jesus. And furthermore, thought our good old Jesuit, the sooner this soul, that is so near heaven, gets into heaven, the sooner will it begin to gain all manner of graces from God for my soul, and for the souls of sinners upon earth. Here was anxiety for the salvation of souls. And so away went the indulgence to the soul that was nearest its release, not without a very fervent sigh, and a very wistful look to Mary, and a comfortable suspicion that Jesus would do something extra for the poor forgotten soul.

The decision of the good father seems to have high authority; for among the revelations made to Sister Francesca of the Blessed Sacrament, a Spanish Theresian nun, it was told her that immense numbers of souls issued from purgatory on the evening of All Souls' Day; and that they were mostly those who were

near to glory, among whom God distributed the suffrages of the Universal Church on that day.* Yet, on the other hand, we know that St. Vincent of Paul's special devotion was to the most destitute soul.† But then destitute souls were his line; he was their property and possession.

The Jesuit had been carefully taught that he was to have a reason for every thing he did. I do not say you are bound to be so particular; but anyhow, it shows how our three things can insinuate themselves into a pious mind, and influence its minutest actions and most secret devotions. And this is the simple object of this treatise. I want to collect for you from the lives of the saints and the works of spiritual writers a number of easy and interesting practices, which will help you to form these three things in your souls, so as to be advancing the interests of our dear Lord every hour of your lives, and yet all the while, in the pleasantest manner possible, becoming something like saints yourselves.

You can take your choice of these practices. None of them are of any obligation. All is free. You are not even bound to choose, if you choose at all, the highest, best, and most perfect: for it is quite possible such would not be best for you. Take what is most to your taste; there is no need to turn your devotions into mortifications. This is one of the uncatholic notions converts should take pains to drive out of their heads. It sounds fine, but it works ill, and it ends in carelessness and lax ways. I want to beguile you into

* Vit. 171.

† Peint par ses Ecrits, p. 258.

serving Jesus out of love, and so I want you to enjoy yourselves and follow your bent in your devotions.

Before concluding this chapter, I am so anxious to get your minds full of the principles I have been laying down, that I will finish by illustrating them in a question familiar to you all. Some people, you know, give all their indulgences to the souls in purgatory; others keep them all to themselves; and one party has no right to interfere with the other. What business has any one to say we are not free to do what the Church says we are free to do? Nevertheless, I am going to take a side in this matter for the moment; it will throw great light on the three things I am advocating; and I shall keep strictly to what theologians and spiritual writers have said.

Grace is such a great thing that we ought to try to increase it in all possible ways; and there are few ways in which we can increase it more rapidly than by turning satisfaction into merit. This is done by gaining indulgences for the souls in purgatory. By this devotion we acquire great spiritual treasures, and it is acceptable to God while it is profitable to ourselves. Let us run through some of the fruits of this devotion, so as to animate ourselves to be more liberal toward these daughters of God and spouses of the Holy Ghost, to assist them with prayers, and with the satisfaction of our good works, offering it all for them without fearing that we shall thereby lose any of it. In truth he will gain immensely who shall not reserve to himself any part of his satisfaction, or any of his indulgences, but shall offer them all for the holy spouses of our dear Redeemer who are detained in those terrible pains.

The first fruit is the great increase of our merits by

this; for, of the three things which the good works of the just include, merit, impetration, and satisfaction, the greatest of all is merit; for by it we become more acceptable to God, and more His friends, receiving greater grace, and so acquiring a new title to greater glory. Doubtless, then, if a man could turn all the satisfaction of his good works into so much fresh merit, over and above the merit there was there before, he would be a gainer by it, and for this reason:—the glory of the blessed is without comparison a greater good than the pains of purgatory are an evil; and so the right to greater glory is a better thing than the right to less pain. He, then, who offers the satisfaction of his good works and his indulgences for the soul in purgatory, does just this:—he converts his satisfaction into merit. In this charity is an heroic act of great virtue, by which he will acquire eternal life by means of that satisfaction turned into merits which is no help at all as simple satisfaction toward eternal life. As satisfaction, it would not have helped him one iota to that, but he makes it do so by turning it into merit, and at the same time helping others. Now this deserves reflection; for, besides the fact that glory is a greater good than purgatory is an evil, we must remember that the increase of glory is a thing which is eternal, whereas the lightening of purgatory is only temporal, for purgatory itself is merely temporal; so that the distance between the increase of glory and the lightening of purgatory is as good as infinite. And yet to enjoy eternal goods, even in the very lowest degree, would be cheaply purchased by the endurance of the greatest temporal evils. We must add to this, that we ought in all things to do that which is most

pleasing in the sight of God, not seeking our own interest or convenience, but His greater good pleasure. To please God is a better thing than to avoid suffering; yet a man who keeps his satisfaction and indulgences to himself, does so from a desire of avoiding suffering; whereas, he who offers them all for the souls in purgatory thereby makes himself dearer to God, by a refinement of love in this heroic exercise of mercy and charity, which he was not bound to, but does out of the sweet freedom of his own will.

The suffering of the holy souls is without any gain or profit to themselves, whereby they can increase their merits, and so long as they are detained in purgatory, so long is the heavenly Jerusalem deprived of her citizens, and the Church upon earth of new protectors and advocates with God. Hence comes another fruit of this devotion. The soul that we release from purgatory is laid under a particular obligation to us, both because of the singular benefit it receives from entering all the sooner into glory, and also because of the tremendous sufferings from which it is delivered. Thus it is bound to obtain for its benefactors perpetual graces and blessings from God. The blessed know that the good they have received is infinite, and being most grateful, they strive to show gratitude proportionate to the greatness of their enjoyment. Thus he who gives his indulgences to the holy souls will have so many agents in the court of heaven to look after his eternal interests; and it is a greater good for a man to secure his salvation in this life through the graces obtained for him by this multitude of heavenly protectors, than to avoid the risk of being somewhat longer in purgatory, because he has given away his satisfaction and indul-

gences. But we gain more than the friendship of the souls we deliver; we gain the love of their guardian angels, and of the saints to whom those souls were specially devoted; and we become also more dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, because of His pleasure at the release of His dear spouse and her entry into His celestial joy.

But there is a third fruit of this devotion which is very much to our purpose. It is a great thing to have some one in heaven who shall love, praise, and glorify God on our behalf. He who loves God fervently and tenderly can never rest without doing all he can that the infinite Majesty of God should be exalted and glorified. Yet with all the miseries and sins of this life, we cannot magnify and adore that most dear Majesty, as the blessed can in heaven. Oh, then, the joy and consolation to think that others, whom we have released from purgatory, are doing this great work for us in heaven, and that, while we are still here, they have begun their praise already! Surely there can be no soul that has been fortunate enough to reach purgatory, which is not holier than ours, and more fitted to glorify God. And if so, then have we ourselves already put one in heaven who shall give God greater glory than we should do if we were there ourselves. While we are eating, drinking, sleeping, toiling, here on earth,—there in heaven,—refreshing thought! most solid consolation!—is the unsleeping soul, or, please God, the many unsleeping souls, whom we have hastened thither, worshipping and exalting the beautiful Majesty of the Most High, unspeakably, incessantly.

This is not all: there is a fourth trait of this gene-

rous devotion. We not only gain invaluable treasures for ourselves, but for others also; for we cause great joy in the Church, both militant and triumphant. Great is the feast in heaven as the number of its citizens is increased; for if there is joy there over one sinner who does penance, and yet he can return to his sin again, what must the joy be over that new citizen who can sin no more? Its guardian angel, too, rejoices, and receives a thousand congratulations from the celestial spirits at the successful issue of his guardianship. There is joy also among the Saints to whom the soul was specially devoted, and among his relatives and friends, and in the choir to which he is aggregated. Our Lady, too, rejoices at the success of her multiplied intercessions; while Jesus reaps the harvest of His Precious Blood with love and with rejoicing. The Holy Ghost vouchsafes to joy over the triumph of His gifts and countless inspirations; and the Eternal Father, in the perfection of His chosen creature, whom he has borne with so long and so compassionately. Neither is the Church Militant less interested in this joy. She has gained a new advocate. The relatives, friends, family, community, country, of that soul have especial reason to rejoice. Nay, all the predestinated, and, indeed, all nature, have cause of joy that another creature has entered into the joy of its Creator.

But there is a fifth fruit of this devotion. Love brooks no delay. Shall a treasure that can do wonders for the glory of God and the interests of Jesus stand idle, it may be, for years? At present we may be in no want of our satisfactions and our indulgences. And if they go into the treasury of the Church, who

knows how many years may elapse before they are used, even if De Lugo's theory be true, that all the satisfactions of the Saints will certainly be used before the day of judgment?* Shall not this talent then be used for God at once, by at once releasing souls from purgatory, who may begin, perhaps this very night, their sweet sacrifice of everlasting praise?

Nay, last of all, what we are giving away comes back to us most abundantly, and this is the sixth fruit of this devotion. First of all, in this very act of such great charity and generosity, there is satisfaction for our sins; for if alms given to relieve bodily wants satisfy above most other good works, what will not spiritual alms do? Secondly, he who loses any thing for the glory of God receives at last a hundred-fold; and He will either give us such grace as that we shall need little purgatory, or He will inspire others to pray for us when we are there, so that, if we had kept our indulgences to ourselves, we might have been long in those fires; whereas if God sets many to gain indulgences for us, we shall enter much sooner into glory. It is an axiom that no one loses who loses for God. And when we are in purgatory, the blessed, who by our means went sooner into heaven, will look upon us as their benefactors, and on our release as a debt of justice. Nay, it is not they only who will acknowledge the debt, but our dear Lord also.

Thus to give all our satisfactions and indulgences to the souls in purgatory is so far from being contrary to

* The doctrine of this passage, as it stood in the first edition, was based on a doubtful passage of Nieremberg, "Avarizia Santa," cap. 27. It has now been corrected by the doctrine of De Lugo, De Sac. Pœnit. Disp. 26, sec. 2, n. 24.

the right order of charity, that it is our best interest to do so. It is a devotion quite teeming with God's glory, and the manifold interests of Jesus, and the love of souls; and it embraces at once the Church Militant, the Church Suffering, and the Church Triumphant. Let us bless God that He has in His mysterious liberality allowed us this inestimable favour of doing what we will with our satisfactions and indulgences; so that, being our own, and at our free disposal, we may rejoice our hearts in thus employing them to His greater glory and sweeter praise.

See how far some have gone, whose praise is in all the Churches. Father Ferdinand de Monroy, a most apostolic man, at the hour of death, made in writing a donation and transfer to the souls in purgatory of all the masses that should be said for him after he was dead, of all the penances offered up for him, and all the indulgences gained for him. He might well make the donation, for little need of such things had one who loved God so tenderly, and had wedded the interests of Jesus so utterly, as this very action shows he must have done. "Love is strong as death: many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it; if a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing."*

Now you see exactly what it is I want of you. You must serve Jesus in some way or other; else you would not save your soul. You are absolutely dependent upon Him. You cannot do without His faith, His life, His death, His Blood, His Church, His Sacraments. You cannot take a step toward heaven, but

* Cant. viii. 6, 7.

by Him. Nothing that you think, or do, or say, is worth any thing until His worth has touched it. Dependence cannot be conceived more utter and absolute, nor more incessant and indispensable, than is your dependence upon him. Thus in some way or other you must serve Jesus. The question is whether it is not best to serve Him out of love. But has your religion been a service of love hitherto? Or have you doled out your duties to Him, as a poor man pays a debt to a rich creditor, looking him in the face between each shilling to see if he really intends to forget his poverty, and take the full amount of his debt? Has not the problem been to find out the least which you must do to gain heaven? Weighing commandments, clipping precepts, interpreting rules, begging dispensations—is not this the kind of thing you have called your religion, your worship of an Incarnate God, beside Himself with love, and hanging bleeding on a Cross?

Now, I maintain to serve Jesus out of love is so much easier than all this. Nothing is easy, which we are not happy while we are doing. Have you been happy in your religion? Far from it! It has been a simple burden to you. If it had not been for heaven and hell, you would have made short work of it long since. But heaven and hell are facts: there they are; and there is no help for us. As, then, we must be religious, I am for a happy religion. I see no use in an unhappy one, if God gives me my choice. But He has done more than that. He wishes me to be happy in my religion. Nay, He wishes my religion to be the happiness and sunshine of my life. Now a happy religion means a religion of love. Every thing comes

easy to love. Thus, I am dependent for my happiness on no one but Jesus. My religion makes me happy all the day long. If serving Jesus out of love were some prodigiously difficult thing, like the contemplation of the saints, or their austerities, then it would be another matter. But the fact is, it is nothing of the kind. To serve God because you are afraid of going to hell, and wish to go to heaven, is a great blessing, and a supernatural work; but it is very difficult. Whereas, to serve God because you love Him is so easy that it is hard to account for so many men in the world neglecting to do it. Stupid souls, so miraculously blind!

And what is a further blessing is, that what makes you happy makes our dearest Lord happy also: and the thought of this again makes us so happy, that we can hardly contain ourselves, and then that again makes Him happier still. And thus religion gets sweeter and sweeter. Life is one long joy, because the Will of God is always being done in it, and the glory of God always being got from it. You become identified with the interests of Jesus; you wed them as if they were your own, as indeed they are. His spirit steals into you, and sets up a little throne in your heart, and crowns itself, and then most sweetly proclaims itself king. It gained the crown by a dear conspiracy: you never suspected what divine love was about all the while. But so it is. God's glory becomes dear to you; you get quite touchy about our Lord, for He is become the apple of your eye; and you are drawn to save souls, because it is what He is always doing, and so you get an instinct and a taste for it yourself. And so it all goes on; and so you live; yet not you,

but Christ lives in you; and so you die. You never suspect you are a saint, or any thing approaching one. Your life is hid with Christ in God, and hid from no one more than from yourself. You a saint indeed! Your humility would either laugh, or be frightened at the bare thought. But, oh the depth of the mercies of Jesus! What will be your surprise at His judgment-seat, to hear the sweet sentence, to see the bright crown! Why, you will almost argue against your own salvation! Our Lord makes the elect do so in the Gospel: Lord, when saw we Thee hungry, and fed Thee? When saw we Thee thirsty, and gave Thee drink? They cannot make it out. In all their love for Jesus, they never dreamed it was so great a thing as this. Ah! only serve Jesus out of love! You cannot beat God in the strife of love! Only serve Jesus out of love,—and while your eyes are yet unclosed, before the whiteness of death is yet settled on your face, or those around you sure that that last gentle breathing was indeed your last. Oh what an unspeakable surprise will you have had at the judgment-seat of your dearest Love, while the songs of heaven are breaking on your ears, and the glory of God is dawning on your eyes, to fade away no more for ever!

CHAPTER III.

Love Wounded by Sin.

IT is said of one of the first fathers of the Oratory, the companion of St. Philip, that he used to prefer those writers on grace who made most of God's sovereignty and least of man's free-will. This remark reveals to us his whole character. It is not so much an expression of his being a faithful disciple of St. Thomas in the particular theological question alluded to, as a disclosure of his peculiar spiritual life, and the bent of his devotion. He had a ruling passion which was more to him than the intrinsic merits of the controversy. He had got a habit of taking God's side in every thing, and of always looking at things from God's point of view. And this is exactly what I am venturing to recommend to you.

A false doctrine is odious, because it is untrue; it is odious also because it gives scandal, or backens devotion, or injures souls. On all these grounds good men hate it. But those who love God with a very tender

and delicate love do not think of it so much in these respects, as because God's honour is wounded by it. God's honour is their first thought. They range themselves at once on God's side. So again, a good man is overwhelmed by an unjust persecution or a cruel calumny. These men are not without the most tender sympathy and the most generous self-sacrifice for the sufferer. But their first thought, their strongest thought, their abiding thought, is the wound inflicted on God's honour by the persecution of His servant, and of the sin almost necessarily committed by the persecutors. So in cases of spiritual destitution, or of great public sins, or of important political changes, or of local calamities, or of Catholic triumphs, or of getting souls out of purgatory, these men by an instantaneous instinct feel and find where God's glory is touched, and are at once so absorbed in it, that they often seem unaffectionate or ungenerous, or uncordial in sorrowing and rejoicing with others; though it is not really so in their hearts.

Now, this taking God's side on every occasion may easily be formed in us as a habit, by time, prayer, and quiet assiduity in devotion; and surely it is a considerable help to us in loving and serving God. It is a great thing gradually to grow in the conviction that there is no real sorrow in the world but sin; that we have no real enemy but sin; and that warfare with sin, in others as well as in ourselves, in prayer as well as in action, is just the one work we have to do, and is just the one work which is worth doing. And it is this conviction which comes of our always taking God's side, and which when it has once come causes us to persevere all the more steadfastly in taking that side. As crea-

tures, we are in our proper place when we are taking the side of our Creator, defending His interests, protecting His majesty, advancing His glory. There is happiness in the darkest lot, peace in the wildest trouble, when we are thus engaged.

But God is not our Creator only; He is our Father also. Oh that we all felt the importance of this! The man who serves God as his Creator, is a very different character from the man who serves Him as his Father. We do not serve God out of love, because we have not a loving idea of God. We are dry, cold, grudging, with Him, because we will persist in looking at Him only as our Lawgiver, or Master, or Sovereign, or Judge. Far more persons would try to go on to perfection, far more would persevere in it, there would be a far less wide gulf between saints and common Catholics, if only we were all agreed to serve God as our Father, and to look upon Him as our Father. It is astonishing what an amount of jealous and unkindly feeling there is even among good people toward God, His sovereignty and His majesty. It is at the root of all the unhappiness and want of comfort in religious duties. It brings with it all sorts of temptations against the faith, and starts all manner of scruples in the mind, which hamper the tenderness of devotion, and freeze the gay spirit of loving mortification. Why, it is the very sunshine of life to believe and feel at every turn that God is our Father, and is acting to us out of a Father's love and in a Father's way!

See what pains God has been pleased to take to prevent this unkindly view of Him on the part of His children. He has committed all judgment to the Son. It is our dear Lord, as man, who is to judge us at the

last. Our very last appeal is to His sacred Human Heart. When God invites His rebellious people to return to Him, by the mouth of Jeremias, He sums up all their sins, and then pleads so compassionately, rather for Himself than with them;* "Therefore, *at the least*, from this time call to me, Thou art my Father." The apostle sums up the whole work of the Gospel in this very thing, that we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father; and when our Lord teaches us to pray, it is by the name of Father that He bids us call on God. Nay, He has provided one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, that of Piety, for the express purpose of enabling us to exercise, even in an heroic degree, a really filial tenderness toward God. This gift is defined to be an habitual disposition which the Holy Ghost infuses into the soul to excite in us a filial affection toward God, and St. Thomas tells us,† that works done to God as our Father, are more meritorious than works done to Him as our Creator, because the motive is more excellent. Of what importance saintly men considered this sweet filial feeling toward God, is shown very remarkably by an observation which Cardinal Bellarmine made when he visited France. He said he was struck with the devout piety of the French, in this sense of the word piety, and that the people seemed to him in consequence better Catholics than the Italians. So at least he is quoted by Lallemant.

St. Paul, not content with the passage already cited from the Epistle to the Romans,‡ repeats almost the same words to the Galatians.§ He speaks as if, under

* Jer. iii. 4. † 2. 2dæ. q. 121. ‡ viii. 15. § Cap. iv.

the old dispensation, God had not, so to say, succeeded in persuading the Jews to look upon Him as their Father, and that, therefore, "when the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, saying, Abba, Father. Therefore, now he is not a servant, but a son." Yet even in the Old Testament, who does not remember the pathetic language of Israel? "Thou art our Father, and Abraham has not known us, and Israel hath been ignorant of us; Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; from everlasting is Thy Name."*

Lancisius, in his Treatise on the Presence of God,† gives a number of acts of love, addressing God as "My most holy Lord and dearest Father," and at the end he puts into the mouth of an objector this question, "Why in these interior acts of love do you add the name of Father?" He replies that it is for four reasons. First, because it is desirable that such acts of love should be elicited from the soul, not merely by the affections of humility and religion implied in the title of Lord, but by an affectionate filial feeling toward Him. Secondly, because of the greater merit thus acquired, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas quoted above. "It is more excellent," says the angelic doctor, "to worship God as our Father, than to worship Him as our Creator and Lord." And St. Leo‡ says, "Great is the sacrament of this privilege, and

* Isaias lxiii. 16. † ii. 66. ‡ Serm. vi. de Nativ.

this gift exceeds all gifts, that God should call man son, and that man should call God Father." Thirdly, because the remembrance that God is our Father excites confidence in us; and it is on this account, says Tertullian, St. Cyprian, and St. Chrysostom, that the Lord's prayer begins, Our Father; for, to quote St. Thomas* again, "confidence is chiefly excited in us by considering God's love toward us, whereby He wishes us good things, and on which account we call Him Father." Fourthly, "we call Him Father," says St. Augustine, "that by the kind name of Father we may win His favour, and by that appellation move Him to grant what we are asking."

There is a very beautiful passage in the revelations of St. Gertrude,† showing how acceptable with God are titles of reverent yet familiar endearment. Our Lord told her that as often as any one says to God, my Love or my Sweetest, or, my best Beloved, and the like, with a devout intention, he receives a pledge of his salvation, in virtue of which, if he perseveres, he shall receive in heaven a special privilege of the same sort as the special grace which St. John the Evangelist, the beloved disciple, had on earth.

Now, if we fully feel that God is our Father, if our daily way of thinking of God, and of approaching Him, is as our most dear Father, it must soon come to pass that there will be nothing on earth half so dear to us as His majesty and honour. We should feel as if it belonged to us, and was really our own, and we should take up any offence against it as warmly as we should now take up an injustice toward ourselves. But it is

* 2. 2dæ q. 83. † l. 3. c. 9.

sin which offends Him; and therefore it would be sin which we should feel to be our one enemy, our only care, our single misery on earth, whether it were in ourselves or in others. Yes; other men's sins would cease to be matters of indifference to us, because they are offences against the Majesty of God. We should fully enter into that constant cry of St. Philip,—Only let there be no sin! only let there be no sin!

When we are full of this view of God, not a day goes by without our detecting something fatherly in Him which we never observed before. Prayer changes, and sacraments accomplish greater things than heretofore. Every thing about us alters by degrees. Duties grow into privileges; penances brighten up into pleasures; pains soften the heart with a delicious humility, and sorrows are heavenly presences. Work becomes rest, and weariness of limb and brain almost touches on the sweet languor of contemplation. It is as if earth were making itself into heaven; and at the commonest sights and sounds something tingles in our hearts as if God were just on the point of speaking or appearing. What another thing is life when we have found out our Father; and if we work, it is beneath His eye, and if we play, it is in the light and encouragement of His smile. Earth's sunshine is heaven's radiance, and the stars of night as if the beginnings of the Beatific Vision; so soft, so sweet, so gentle, so reposeful, so almost infinite have all things become, because we have found our Father in our God.

When we love God, we rejoice that He is God, that He is so good and perfect as He is. We call this feeling the love of complacency. We transfer His joy to ourselves; we rejoice in it as if it were our own,

simply because we love Him. Jacob would not believe in Joseph's glory, but* seeing him, he fell upon his neck, and embracing him, he said, Now shall I die with joy, because I have seen thy face, and leave thee alive. But this is not the only office of love. If it makes us happy because the Object of our love is happy, by transferring His happiness into our hearts, and so making his interests our own, the same love will equally make us sorrowful, because the Object of our love is wronged and oppressed, by transferring His injury to ourselves, and placing His wrongs in our hearts, as if they were rather ours than His. What I mean is this, that to sorrow over the sins of others is no far-fetched devotion, or subtle refinement of religious feeling; but that it follows inevitably upon the love of God. Where there is no such sorrow for sin, either in ourselves or others, there is no love of God; and in proportion to the amount of love will the degree of sorrow be. What was it that made our Blessed Lady's dolours more intolerable than all the tortures of the martyrs, but that her love exceeded all the martyrs' love? Thus, if God is wronged and outraged, we take the wrong into our hearts, and it wounds us by means of the love we have for Him.

Nay, as sympathy and compassion are feelings more easily excited in us than those of complacency, it seems as if God wished to cultivate what theologians call the love of condolence, even more than of complacency. This is one reason why devotion to the Passion is the great popular devotion of the whole Church. It may also be a reason why our Lord was pleased to suffer so

* Gen. xlvi.

much more than He need have done, and with so many unnecessary touching circumstances, that to condole with Him in His Passion might be all the easier, and so He might have more of our poor love. Neither does it require any rare amount of love to feel this sacred compassion. The women of Jerusalem were no saints, yet they wept over Him in the way of the Cross. Job's friends were the meanest-hearted of men, yet even compassion mastered their pompous dryness and unamiable pedantry. What we want of all things is our hearts softening, and sorrow softens them sooner and more effectually than joy.

I have no hope we shall get any further loves into our heart, if we do not first domesticate this love of condolence there. We do not find such great fault with a man who does not joy in another's joy, as we do with him who grieves not with another's grief. Sympathy belongs to our position in the world, and there is hope for the most sinful heart, if it only keeps its quick and affectionate sympathies. Out of all evil comes good; and so from sin and the Passion of our dear Lord, as from two perennial fountains, flows this blessed love of condolence in our hearts. And see what this love can do! Mary's compassion is said, in a certain sense, to have co-operated with our Blessed Lord's Passion in the saving of the world. How many instances we have on record of God showing mercy to sinners, just because they kept up some trifling tender memory of His loving Passion! We must grieve with Him now, if we would rejoice with Him hereafter. I wish you would reflect on this. I do not think you keep it in mind as you ought, or appreciate its value. St. Francis of Sales says, that the ardent

desire of our Saviour to enter our souls by this dolorous love is inexplicable. Here then, is a sweet way of loving Him, a sweet way of giving Him greater glory. You will not refuse Him when it is so easy. I am sure you love Him. I am sure you wish to love Him more. I will not believe that it is not so. Dear Lord! who can help loving Him? Is there such a thing as a heart that does not love Him? But it is not our business now to go in search of such strange things, or to see if such dreadful wonders exist upon the earth. We love Him; blessed be His grace for that! There was his old Passion eighteen hundred years ago; there is His daily passion now, and His nightly agony, because sin abounds. Cruel sin! cruel sinners! But He shall take refuge with us; only listen at your hearts, and hear what He says. Is it not clear?* Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled; for My head is full of dew, and My locks of the drops of the nights!

But you may say, sorrowing for other men's sins is all very well for saints; we know the saints have done so; but it is a thing rather to be admired than imitated; it is above us; it would be an injudicious practice in us; we do not half sorrow for our own sins yet; we must not go so quick; we must learn a little more of that first. Alas! do not make such an objection as this. Let me take you on your own ground. You have not, you say, half enough sorrow for your own sins. There is nothing you regret so much as this, nothing which seems to you more uncomfortable and unpromising in your spiritual life. But why have you

* Cant. v. 2.

not more sorrow? Because you look more at sin as it affects the interests of your own soul than as it affects the interests of God. I do not mean to say you are not to look at it in that way—God forbid. You must do the one, but you must not leave the other undone. Now, if you look at sin simply as it regards your own reward and punishment, it is clear you will never get an adequate hatred of sin; for your punishment is far from being the chief evil of sin. Its chief evil is its outrage of the majesty of God; and if you could see it in this light, you would have a much keener sorrow for your own sins than you have. But, then, in order to see it in this light, you must learn to look with an eye of sorrow on the sins of others; for there you have no interests of your own, there you are contemplating simply the injured glory of our Heavenly Father. And thus, in order to sorrow more deeply and more effectually for your own sins, you must mourn for God's dear sake over the sins of others. And this is the practice which I wish now to recommend to you as embodying the spirit of the Confraternity:—sorrowing for the sins of others, and making reparation to God's injured glory for them.

I say this practice embodies the spirit of the Confraternity, because the reasons for grieving over other men's sins are the same reasons given before for belonging to the Confraternity. We sorrow for other men's sins, because God's glory is injured by them, because the fruit of our dear Lord's Passion is spoiled or wasted, and because souls are damaged and lost thereby. You see the same three things come over and over again; and you must not be weary of my repeating them so often. But, when I use the word sorrow, you must not

misunderstand me; I am not putting before you any thing melancholy, or disagreeable. Far from it. The sorrow I speak of is one of the greatest pleasures in life, enough to lighten a heavy heart, rather than to depress a light one. Hear how the Eternal Father vouchsafed to explain this to His beloved daughter, St. Catherine of Siena. After speaking to her* of the five kinds of tears men shed, he speaks† of a state of the soul at once blessed and yet sorrowing. "It is blessed, indeed, from its sensible union with Me, wherein it tastes the Divine Love. Its sorrow arises from its view of the offences which are committed against Me, who am the Eternal Goodness, whom it beholds and tastes in its knowledge of itself and of Me. Neither does this hinder its state of union with Me; for the tears which it sheds are of great sweetness, proceeding from its knowledge of itself in its love of its neighbour. For it finds the plaintiveness of love in My mercy, and the sorrow of love in the miseries of its neighbours. So it weeps with those that weep, and joys with those that joy; for the soul rejoices when My servants pay honour and glory to My name." And again,‡ "This *unafflicting* pain, arising from my being offended, and from the misfortunes of its neighbours, is founded on a most real charity, and fattens the soul. Nay, a man rejoices and exults in this pain, because it is a most convincing proof that I am in his soul by a very special grace."

Thus it has been that the Saints who have received the most eminent gift of tears, have also been inundated above others with spiritual joy. The old biographer of St. John Climacus tells us, that words cannot express

* Dial. 88. † Cap. 89. ‡ Cap. 95.

the ravishing effects which his gift of tears produced in his soul; and the Saint himself, in the seventh step of his Ladder of Perfection, says, that "they who have received the gift of tears spend every day of their lives as a spiritual feast." Truly there is no bitterness in the tears of those who love; and what can there be but peace and joy in tears which are a gift of Him who is the love and jubilee, as St. Augustine calls Him, of the Father and the Son?

But I shall make myself more clear by giving you instances of this sorrow for all sins against the glory of God, from the saints themselves; and you will thus see how sweet and easy the practice is. God made the following revelation to the same St. Catherine.* "I am greatly pleased, my dearest daughter, with this desire of enduring every pain and toil, even till death, for the salvation of souls. For the more a man endures, the more he shows his love of Me; and loving Me, he knows more of My truth; and the more he knows of Me, the more he feels the pain and intolerable grief of all sin against Me. You asked to take the punishment of other people's faults upon yourself, and you did not perceive that in asking that, you were all the while asking love, light, and knowledge of the truth; for, as I have already said, the greater love is, the greater is the pain; so, as love grows, sorrow will also grow." St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi went into a rapture one day when she was meditating on the words of the Gospel: "There came forth blood and water." "She saw," says her confessor, "a great multitude of souls in the side of Jesus, shining like gems on a royal crown; and

* Dial. c. 5.

she said: 'So our souls, beautified by Blood, become the crown of the Word, because of the manifestation of the Word which they make before the rest of creation; and He glories in this, as a king glories in his royal crown.' She saw the souls who entered into this loving cavern of the Wounded Side, expressing two affections. First, they transformed themselves into blood by love, and then into water by sorrow. 'But God takes more pleasure in a soul which, in this life at least, transforms itself by sorrow, than in one that transforms itself by love; though I know, O Word! that the sorrow which a soul feels at seeing Thee offended can only arise from the love it bears to Thee, which in itself is more perfect than sorrow. Yet by the way of sorrow the soul is better exercised in the love of its neighbour, because thereby the zeal for his salvation masters it in a more lively manner. There is another reason, too, why in this life the exercise of sorrow pleases God more than the exercise of love, because the former is a sort of martyrdom, by which souls resemble Him hanging on the Cross, and their sorrow is compassion for His great pains, and as it were tears of love for His Passion. And when this sorrow rises to the point of affliction, it cleanses the soul from its sins. Love is certainly more delectable; but, as we are in this world to be cleansed, it is rather the time for sorrowing and suffering for the love of our God; and so it is that God takes more complacency in sorrow than in love.'" On another occasion, after communion, our Lord told the same saint to mourn like a turtle-dove, and to compassionate Him because he was so little known and loved by His creatures.

Indeed this is the very office which nuns have to fill

in the Church of God. There are none of them, no matter how they may be occupied with education or other external work, who have not this burden laid upon them by the mere fact of their religious profession. A number of pious and amiable ladies living together in peace and harmony, going through the daily routine of spiritual exercises prescribed by the letter of their rule, and engaged in the education of youth, without any recognition of a supernatural end, or any practical feeling that they are pledged to Jesus more than others are,—these are not nuns, however picturesque their habit may seem, and however respectable the individuals may be. It is pleasant, indeed, that ladies should have such a retreat from the world, where so much frivolity and temptation are kept at arm's length. But such retreats are not convents. Convents are quite other sort of places; and a lady retired from the world does not become simply on that account a mystical spouse of Jesus Christ. There is necessarily, by the vow of poverty, if by nothing else, an expiatory character in nuns. They have to mourn as turtle-doves. It is not they who are so much sheltered from the world, as Jesus, who is sheltered by them from the wicked world, in the cloister of their hearts. Their spirit must be one of loving sorrow, of sweet reparation, of holy languishing over the wrongs of their heavenly Spouse. They have wedded His interests, and must grieve and be glad with him. He has given them His glory to nurse. The world is their cross, and they must carry it. They may not be indifferent to its sins; they are set apart to mourn over them. Never, where this spirit is wanting, will be found the royal heart of mortification the blessed

heights of mental prayer, the awe-inspiring yet gladdening and refreshing atmosphere of the really supernatural life. Neither time, nor country, nor occupation, can dispense the spouses of Jesus Christ from their office of turtle-doves of the Sacred Heart. They must realize in a constant spirit of reparation and oblation, the sentiments which were habitual to the Blessed Paul of the Cross. He lamented and deplored, with bitter tears, the ingratitude of men who corresponded so coldly to the unbounded goodness of God, and he would repeat: "What! a God made man! A God crucified! A God dead! A God hidden under the sacramental species! Who? A God?" And then he would be for some time silent in a sort of ecstatic stupor, and then again would exclaim, "Oh burning charity! Oh passionate love! Who? And for whom? Oh ungrateful creatures! How is it that you love not God? I would that it were possible to set all the world on fire with love. Ah for a little strength to go out into the open fields preaching my dear crucified Jesus, our good Father dying upon the cross for us sinners!"

If this be true of nuns, then it is so important that it should be always foremost in their thoughts. If they have an expiatory character, it must obviously be the chief thing about them. The success of their school must be a very secondary affair, and so also must be the number of their novices, and the architecture of their convents, and their exemptions from episcopal rule. Now, when nuns set to work and praise themselves under cover of praising their *holy* community, or their *holy* rule, or their *holy* founder, when they are full of pity for people living in the

world, eloquent on dangers and snares from which they are delivered, and loud in self-gratulation on the grace of their vocations, I cannot avoid, perhaps in a spirit of contradiction, arguing thus:—These good nuns must take a low view of what Jesus requires of His spouses, or they would be more frightened about their own short-comings; I suspect our Lord does not fare over well in that community, and that the interior life of it is sadly shallow. Self-praise is apt to be the besetting sin of nuns; and they should sometimes remind themselves that a publican in the world needs less pity than a Pharisee in the cloister. An occasional week's meditation on the awful and adorable purity of God would accomplish this end with especial benediction. If a good soul were to see all at once what it has pledged itself to in the way both of perfection and of suffering by religious profession, perhaps without a miracle it could not endure the vision, and live. Ah! the lively, spiritual prattle about convent joys and convent privileges must come either from a very young novice, or a sadly inexperienced nun. It is never heard in those delightful houses where all breathes of the supernatural, of abasement, of tranquillity, of God, where the very air rebukes proud thoughts, and from which we carry away a precious disesteem of self without the conceited bitterness of self-reproach.

Still more remarkable is the proof of the power over the Sacred Heart of this practice of sorrowing for the sins of others, which we find in the life of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi. It is full of the most encouraging sweetness and soothing consolation for ourselves, for, in our measure and degree, how easy it is for us to follow her footsteps, though far behind, in this holy

practice! When she was a little girl, only eight years old, she heard one person abuse another in such a way as to commit a sin thereby. She was so shocked by this offence to God, that she could not sleep all the night after, for weeping over the outrage committed against the majesty of God. Sixteen years elapsed, and the saint probably had forgotten all about it; when God, in a revelation, told her that in consequence of that act of sorrow for another's sin, there was prepared for her a special glory, which He represented to her under the figure of a glorious flame-coloured garment. He who forgetteth not the cup of cold water, can still less forget these interior acts of loving sorrow or of sorrowing love. What a treasure is here for us, if our love would only be wakeful and watch for the opportunities!

St. Bonaventure says of St. Francis, that he filled the groves with his moanings, and everywhere shed tears and beat his breast, as he murmured in his talk with God, or at times called out with clamorous cries, begging mercy for sin. "Nay," says the seraphic Doctor, "when he saw souls, redeemed with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, polluted by any stain of sin, he wept over them with such tenderness of compassion, that it seemed as though, motherlike, he was every day bringing them to the birth in Christ. The glory of God, the interests of Jesus, the love of souls, so run and blend into one with the blessed patriarch of Assisi, that the three motives do duty for each other. He begins with one, and ends with another; for, in good truth, of them it may most reverently be said, "And these three are one."

St. Lawrence Justinian, the patriarch of Venice,

says,* "He cannot help sorrowing for other people's sins, who sorrows truly for his own. A healthy limb on the body, that helps not the others when they are sick, occupies its place in vain. These members, likewise, of the Church, who see their brethren's sin and do not weep over it, or compassionate the ruin of their souls, are useless members. When our Redeemer wept over the city that was to perish, He considered it the more to be deplored as it knew not itself its deplorable condition. As many, therefore, as are set on fire by the torch of love, weep over other men's sins as if they were their own. Yet no one worthily deplores the sins of others, who by voluntary falls neglects his own. We must at least cease to sin wilfully if we desire to mourn over the falls of others." St. Augustine says,† "We mourn over the sins of others, we suffer violence, we are tormented in our minds." St. Chrysostom says, that Moses was raised above the people because he habitually deplored the sins of others. "He," says the same holy Doctor, "who sorrows for other men's sins, has the tenderness of an apostle, and is an imitator of that blessed one, who said, 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?'" "Who," says St. Austin,‡ "is not angry when he sees men renouncing the world, not in deeds but in words? who is not angry when he sees the brethren plotting against each other, and breaking faith with each other, faith which has been pledged in the sacraments of God? Who can count up all the evils whereby men provoke the Body of Christ, which liveth inwardly in the Spirit of Christ, and which groans like

* Fascic. Amor. cap. 14. † Serm. 44. ‡ In Psalm xxx.

the grain upon the threshing-floor? Scarcely do we see those who thus groan, who are thus angry (with the sins of others,) for hardly do we see any grain when the threshing-floor is swept. It was because he saw none who were thus angered, that he says, 'The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me;' and again, when he saw many sinning, he said, 'A fainting hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked who forsake Thy law;' and again, 'I saw the fools, and I wasted away.'"

In a similar strain, Lancisius quotes St. Chromatius of Aquileia, whom St. Jerome calls most holy and most learned. "Do you wish to know what the pious grief of saints is like? Hear what is said of the prophet Samuel, who mourned for King Saul, even to the day of his death. Jeremias, also, when he bewailed the sins of the people, says, 'My eyes have poured out floods of water over the contrition of my people.' And again: 'Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes?' Daniel, also, was affected with sorrow and heaviness for the sins of the people, as he himself testifies, saying, 'In those days I, Daniel, mourned the days of three weeks. I ate no desirable bread, and neither flesh nor wine entered into my mouth, neither was I anointed with ointment.' The Apostle mourned with a like sorrow over some of the Corinthians, saying, 'Lest when I come God humble me among you, and I mourn many of them that have sinned before, and have not done penance.' This is the kind of grief which the Lord recompenses with the consolation of perpetual joy, as Isaias says,* 'That He

* lxi. 3.

will appoint to the mourners of Sion a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of grief.' "*

Now, have we thought sufficiently of this? We live in a land where we see God offended every day and every hour. We see souls perishing for want of faith: we hear blasphemies on all sides: "truths are diminished among the children of men." Does all this grieve us? Have we felt it as personal calamity? Or have we shut ourselves selfishly up in our own hearts, thanking God, with an unamiable gratitude, that we at least have the true faith and the living sacraments, and looking on all the rest as a doomed multitude, who are no concern to us one way or another? If you have no tie to the souls of all these, and indeed you have, for Christ shed His Precious Blood for them as well as you, at least you have a tie to the glory of God; and can you feel that you really love God, in your own sense of the word love, if you do not keenly feel His dishonour? But it is not to upbraid you that I write —God forbid! for, see how warmly you have corresponded all along to the spirit of our Confraternity; it is rather to explain to you and urge upon you the practices which will cultivate that sweet spirit more and more. Hear, then, what God said to St. Catherine of Siena:† "It is with reason that you, My elect, are in bitter grief of heart because of the offences I am continually receiving from men, and out of compassion for their culpable ignorance, by which they gravely sin against Me, to the damage, nay, to the condemnation of their own souls. This I gratefully accept from

* Ap. Lancis. ii. 22.

† Dial. c. 28.

you, and it is My wish that you should act so." See also what was the experience of the B. Angela of Foligno in this matter. Before her death, she made a sort of devout will, in which she bequeathed certain admonitions to her spiritual children, and this is one: "I tell you that my soul has received more from God when I mourned for the sins of others, than when I grieved for my own. The world makes light of what I say, that a man can deplore his neighbour's sins as much as his own, yea, more than his own, because it seems to be contrary to nature; but the charity which does so is not of this world."

When St. Ignatius was living in the house of John Pascal, at Barcelona, and was spending the night in prayer, he was seen raised to some height above the ground, and the whole room illuminated with the brightness which proceeded from his face, while he kept repeating over and over again these words: "O my Lord, my heart, my beloved! Oh, if men did but know Thee, they would never sin!" Thus it is said of Father Peter Faber, the companion of St. Ignatius, that he had an abiding sadness of mind because he was touched to the quick by the sight of men sinning. As St. Augustine says:* "This is the persecution which all suffer who desire to live piously in Christ, according to the true and biting sentence of the apostle. For what persecutes the life of the good more sharply than the life of the wicked, not because it forces the good to imitate what displeases them, but because it compels them to grieve over the life they behold? For, in the sight of a pious man, an evil liver, though

* Epist. 141.

he does not oblige him to consent to his sin, yet tortures him with the sight and sorrow of it." Thus it is said of the B. Clare of Montefalco, in her life, that when she heard of any one in mortal sin, she turned at once to the crucifix, and weeping inconsolably, and sighing from the bottom of her heart, she said, "Ah, then, and is all lost, so far as this soul is concerned, which my Lord suffered for it?" And then, unable to bear the thought, she prostrated herself upon the ground, and prayed for the conversion of the sinner.

Oh that there were such a heart in us that we could make these dispositions our own! Oh that we felt sin to be indeed the one solitary evil of the world! Oh that the hunger and thirst after the glory of our most dear Lord were consuming us all the day long! Yet how soon these feelings come, if only we set ourselves in earnest to seek them, and to ask them of God. What does He want but to be loved—loved always, loved everywhere; and how, then, if we ask this love of Him, can He refuse it to us? Why not turn all our prayers into one, and pray early and late for more love of God? But you may say, In what ways are we to practise this sorrow for the sins of others?

1. We should strive in our meditations to see how God ought to be served and glorified by His creatures. We should put before ourselves His infinite perfections and attributes, His beauty and loveliness in Himself. We should picture to ourselves the perfect obedience with which His will is done in Heaven, and try to unite ourselves with the interior dispositions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and all the hierarchies and choirs of angels.

We should count up the benefits and blessings which in His infinite love He has bestowed upon His creatures, and especially in the four great wonders of mercy, Creation, the Incarnation, the Holy Eucharist, and the Beatific Vision. Then, when we have worked this well into our minds, we shall see what sin really is, how terrible it is to offend so great a majesty, how base beyond words to tell to wound so unutterable a love. We shall then hardly be able to leave the house and follow our worldly occupations, without finding food for this sorrow over sin. At every step almost we shall be called upon to make acts of reparation to the injured glory of God. The amount of the world's forgetfulness of God will strike us every day as more and more astonishing. So far from getting used to it, the more the beauty and the tenderness of God's majesty grow into us, the more will the hatefulness of sin come upon us with all the startling force of novelty. The sort of common consent by which men ignore God, His rights, His claims, and His interests, will seem to us almost more hideous than overt acts of sin. Life will become a burden, the world feel as a strange and unhomelike place, and a blessed weariness will come over us, which will find no repose but upon the sweet and satisfying thought of God.

2. Another method of practising this sorrow for sin is the one suggested by St. Bernard to Pope Eugenius:* "Lift up the eyes of your reflection, and behold the nations. Are they not rather dry for the fire than white for the harvest? How much is there that looks like fruit, which yet, on nearer inspection, is but

* De Consid. ii. 6.

briers? Nay, not even briers, but old and knotted trees, bearing only such mast and acorns as the swine can eat." Take the map of the world; look first at Asia, where our Lord was born and suffered. Look at Turkey, Persia, Tartary, China, Japan, and the vast continent of India: how few Christians are to be found in the whole extent! Fearful systems of idolatry, the foul creed of Mohammed, communities bearing the name of Christ, yet in truth denying it in heresy and schism,—these exercise an almost unlimited sway over those beautiful regions, and only here and there is there one to be found who calls on the saving Name of Jesus, and worships His Precious Blood. Yet there was man created, and Eden planted; there was the home of the chosen people; there the Son of God taught and suffered; there the apostles preached, and Athanasius, Basil, Gregory, and Chrysostom upheld the faith, and trampled upon heresy. As to Japan and China, their very soil is soaked with the blood of our dear Lord's martyrs. Yet how scanty the harvest of His glory.

Look along the Mediterranean shores of Africa, where once above four hundred bishops had their thrones, and then into the vast regions of the Moors, the Hottentots, and Caffres! On how many leagues of country the sun shines where none call on Jesus, or know of His blessed Cross! America is better, and so also is Australia; for thanks to the Spaniards and the Irish, there is the knowledge of the Gospel there. Yet how many tribes are still unconverted, and how many millions of heretics bear the Christian name in vain! Look, too, how heresy has eaten into the fair fields of Europe! Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Scotland, England, are

all more or less its prey, and multitudes are daily passing into perdition within the sound of the true Gospel, and withing reach of the holy sacraments! This was the picture that St. Lawrence Justinian looked upon when he wrote his treatise on the Complaint of Christian Perfection. This was the picture God Himself beheld when He complained so bitterly to St. Catherine of Siena that priests and prelates cared not for His glory, and in their idleness and self-seeking trod His dear interests under foot. Oh what a field is there here for acts of love! Think of the day when the compassionate Creator looked over His own beautiful creation, virgin and undefiled, and blessed it because it was all so good. Think of the day when, to bring back that primal benediction, nay, to give it a new and better benediction, Jesus hung upon the Cross on Calvary. And this is the result!—this is the sinner's recompense to God! As our thoughts wander on, and our eyes rest on the coloured provinces of Mohammedans, heathens, and heretics, do we not feel drawn to offer to God all the acts of adoration which the angels have made this day in heaven, in reparation for the glory these poor outcasts have not given Him? Another while we resort to the merits of Jesus Himself, to the heroic virtues of His ever-blessed Mother, to the apostles, martyrs, virgins, doctors, confessors, that we may supply with loving intention the praise that should arise to the Divine Majesty from all these tribes and nations.

3. Another practice is suggested by F. Balthazar Alvarez, St. Theresa's confessor. It is to journey over the world in spirit, and visit the many churches and tabernacles where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved,

and so few come in to visit the Love of our souls. "The streets," says he, "are full, but the churches are empty. Crowds are eagerly intent on their own interests, and so few come to commune with Jesus about His!" St. Alphonso, also, with his usual thoughtful sweetness, suggests to us how many churches there are where Jesus is obliged to dwell in filth, disorder, and neglect, and where from week's end to week's end no one comes to visit Him. With what childlike acts of love, ever varying, yet ever tender, may we not pour out our hearts before Him in all these deserted sanctuaries! Can we not muse on Jesus thus abandoned till our hearts grow hot, and the tears come into our eyes; and oh how acceptable to Him is this little offering of heartfelt sorrow! He loves to be remembered, as all lovers do; and nothing is little in His sight which is done for the love of Him, for His love transmutes and magnifies it all.

I do not say that you should faint at the bare name of sin, as saints have done: such things require a special grace and great heights of love. But some little you can do in reparation and in sorrow for the sins of the world, and out of that little, be it ever so little, God will have great glory, and we shall comfort one another's hearts.

Yet, as I said before, we must not forget to sorrow for our own sins also, and to sorrow for them chiefly as offences against a God so infinitely good and loving. "If we grieve and sorrow for our sins," says St. Chrysostom, "we lessen the magnitude of our sin; what was great we make small, nay, oftentimes we do away with it altogether." And St. Basil, commenting on those words, "Thou has turned my weeping into joy,"

says, "It is not every one into whose soul God infuses joy, but into his who has deplored his sin with vehement grief, and with assiduous lamentation, as if he wept for himself dead; for such weeping turns to joy at last." "We ought to bear our sins in mind," says St. Chrysostom again, "for not only do we extinguish them by so doing, but we become gentler and more indulgent toward others, and we serve God with greater tenderness, having from that memory of our sins a better insight into His inestimable goodness." Scripture tells us, "Be not without fear of a forgiven sin;"* and, indeed, such a fear will be the best security against another fall. Some saints tell us that if we knew by divine revelation that our sins were forgiven, we should still sorrow for them, as David did when such a revelation was vouchsafed him, and St. Paul, who was confirmed in grace; for such a sorrow is continually feeding our love of God. St. Udo mentions a most interesting thing in his life of St. Gerard, who used to feel after his conversion the greatest compunction for the most trifling defects, just as St. Jerome tells us of St. Paula. Now God made known to St. Gerard that the grave sins of his past life were remitted to him, because of this holy sorrow for venial faults committed since his conversion. Yet in this sorrow we must not be excessive; we must consider our sins more in the general than in the particular, and, above all, as was revealed to St. Catherine, it should be rather a recollection of the Precious Blood, and a pondering of the Divine Mercy, than a dry study of our sins, according to the advice of St. Bernard: "I advise you, my friends,

* Ecclus. v. 5.

occasionally to draw back from the annoying and anxious scrutiny of your ways, and to go out upon the wider and serener paths of the Divine benefits. Sorrow for sin is indeed necessary, but it should not be continual. We should interpolate it with the more joyous thought of God's compassion. We must mingle honey with our wormwood, or else its bitterness will not be healthy."

Life is but a very little while, compared with eternity; and throughout eternity we shall be infinitely happy, and yet have but one occupation—to give glory to God. We shall literally have nothing else to do. And this single task will contain in itself such treasures of bliss, that there will be nothing left that we can desire. Why not begin this work on earth? Why not try even now to fall in love with that dear glory of God which will be our joy and worship in the life to come? The character of God's goodness is to be communicative. He is always communicating Himself to His creatures, in nature, in grace, in glory. We must copy this example. There is such a thing as a selfish goodness, thinking only about our own selves and our own souls. Indeed, this does seem a great matter, when we see so many thousands round about us who hardly realize that they have souls at all. Yet it is dangerous to dwell exclusively on this. And who can have the Precious Blood, and know what it is, and feel what it does, and yet not long to pass it on to other souls? I would we could always do all things for the sole glory of God; but this can hardly be. Yet we may all do, without effort, much more than we have done, if we will only try to sorrow over sin, over the

sins of the whole world, because our Blessed Lord God is so deeply offended by them.

Neither is this devotion without immense blessings to our own souls. What hinders us most, when we have once set to work to serve God in good earnest, is not so much sin as worldliness and self-love. Now see how both these miseries, which so hang about us, keep us down, and adulterate all the good we do; see how both of them are kept in check by this devotion. The characteristic of the world is that it ignores sin. Things are right or wrong as it pleases, and according to its own canons; but as to a secret stain upon the immortal soul because the invisible God is offended, this it will not hear of for a moment. It is reckoned a doctrine to unman people, an idle bugbear, a priestly superstition. A man who sees every thing as sin or not sin, who seeks everywhere the secret glory of the hidden Creator, who follows unearthly standards, and uses unearthly weights and measures, who strives to do the commonest actions from supernatural motives, and who can love what he does not see, until he loses the power of loving, or at least of loving vehemently, what he does see, can hardly be possessed either by the spirit of worldliness or of self-love. His life is a protest against the world, and also against himself. Yet this is only a description of what a man would soon become who took up this devotion. He who looks long and lovingly on God will soon cease to see any loveliness in himself; and thus this practice would deliver him from the two greatest enemies he has in the spiritual life.

We should find also that this devotion would give us great power with God. Answers to prayers would

begin to come more thickly upon us than before. Our words would have a weight beyond themselves, or beyond our talents, reasoning, or eloquence. What is worth any thing which God has not blessed? Spiritual power is the only real power; and it follows different rules from other power. When St. Vincent of Paul founded his Congregation of the mission, Father Condren, the superior of the French Oratory, and one of the most spiritual men of his day, said to him, "Ah! my father! I recognise that this is the work of God, and that the spirit of Jesus is upon it, and that it will succeed, for all the men are of low birth, and none of them of learning. This is the sort of weapon to which God gives power." See on what unworldly principles his judgment was formed. St. Philip made out that all power was in detachment from the world; and the work of St. Ignatius may be summed up in one word, that he proved this to the world—this very thing, that detachment is its master. So do you take up this devotion to God's offended glory, and you will see by many a sensible proof that God is with you in other more abundant and more effectual ways than he has been heretofore.

And, lastly, if you wish to press on toward the prize of Christian perfection, and to become a saint, listen to this story, listen to what happens to a man who has done no more than this, hindered two mortal sins from being consummated in outward acts. St. Paphnutius had dwelt in the desert for many a long year, and by weary penances had toiled for his sanctification. At last a strange thought came into his mind, and he ventured to express it in prayer to God. He desired to know to whom on the earth he was equal in sanctity.

He asked it in simplicity and true humility, and God vouchsafed to speak to him. He told him he was now equal to a certain piper in an Egyptian village that He named. At once the saint set forth to seek him. When he came to the village he asked for the piper, and was told he was piping in the tavern for the amusement of those who were drinking there. Strange! thought St. Paphnutius. However, he sought the piper out, led him aside, and spoke to him of his spiritual state. What good works had he done? Good works! rejoined the piper; I know of nothing good that I have ever done; but once, when I was a robber, I saved from violence a virgin consecrated to God; and once, also, I gave money to a poor woman, who, out of poverty, was offering herself to sin. And then Paphnutius understood how God had given to that piper graces equal to his own, because for his Maker's glory he had in his rough robber-days hindered two mortal sins.

But we cannot better illustrate how this sorrow for other men's sins may be effective, as well as affective, that is, may be expressed in deeds as well as feelings, than by giving the practices recommended by a spiritual writer* for the days of the carnival. He entitles them, Devotions which are often performed by souls loving God, on the days of the Carnival, and at other times when worldly men usually sin against God more than usual.

1. To abstain at that season with more than common care from some particular fault which ordinarily besets us.

*Lancis. De Præs. Dei, 81.

2. To increase our time of prayer by adding at least half an hour to it.

3. To read longer than usual, say for an hour, some spiritual book, not one which will feed curiosity, but one which will excite pious affections toward God, such as the Confessions of St. Augustine, the Imitation of Christ, and the Lives of the Saints.

4. To afflict our bodies with some new penance, or to prolong some customary penance beyond its usual time.

5. To visit the Blessed Sacrament more frequently on these days; and when we have finished our usual devotions, to excite in ourselves a feeling of compassion for our offended God, just as we visit our friends to console them and show our love to them in times of sorrow; also to shed tears, or at least to weep in our hearts, for the sins of this season, especially for the sins of those who either by reason of their condition, or of the many benefits they have received from God, ought the more scrupulously to abstain from offending Him.

6. Every time the clock strikes, to make a brief but affectionate act of sorrow for the sins of the season: this may be done in any way, walking, or at meals, &c.

7. At least three times in the day, with a most profound genuflexion, and with great feeling, to adore the Divine Majesty toward the four quarters of the world, in which God is at this time being so grievously offended, desiring in some sort of way to compensate by this loving adoration, for the sins which are then being committed in those regions, grieving for them, and asking for their remission and for the conversion of sinners, and for that end offering up the Precious Blood and merits of Jesus Christ, which are most dear to God and

most profitable to sinners. It was thus St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi obtained the conversion of many sinners.

8. To do our ordinary good works on these days more perfectly, diligently, and fervently, especially those which relate to the immediate worship of God. For, as at these seasons worldly men and the servants of the devil are more diligent and fervent in offending God, it is but right that souls loving God should be at least in the same proportion more diligent and fervent in well-doing and in divine worship.

9. To make an additional communion in order to appease God, and to worship Him by our loving reparation.

10. As God is especially offended on these days by excesses in eating and drinking, to mortify our appetite somewhat more than usual either in quantity or quality.

11. As God is also especially offended at such times by immodest conversations, to agree with some pious friend to meet and spend a short time daily in spiritual conference, simply to give pleasure and consolation to our good God.

12. As men are especially guilty at such times of sinful idleness, to take more than common care about the spending of our time, so that apart from innocent and proper recreation, no part of it should pass in idleness and inutility, but rather to be more industrious than usual.

13. Those who are under any vows should on these days renew them with fresh acts of love to God, a devotion suggested to us by our Lord's fixing the Thursday before Quinquagesima for espousing St. Catherine of Siena.

In England the place of the Carnival would be of course supplied by the days following the three feasts of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. There are none whose work lies among souls who do not know by painful experience the horrors of these three seasons among us; and it is so difficult to speak strongly against cheap excursions, railway-trips, and such like miseries, that no remedy seems left but prayer and reparation. To pray for rain on such days sounds ill-natured, yet it may hinder multitudes of sins. Many a ruin of modesty and innocence dates from a cheap trip, and many a soul has been shipwrecked on the harmless river between London Bridge and Rosherville.

There are three very beautiful revelations by which God has been pleased to make known how acceptable to His Divine Majesty is this reparation at the Carnival. One is to the Blessed Henry Suso, the Dominican; the other two to St. Gertrude. I will quote one of these last, as embodying the spirit which I am anxious this treatise should convey. It is from the fourth book of her Insinuations of Divine Piety.

At the time of the Carnival, the Lord Jesus appeared to her sitting upon the throne of His Glory, and St. John the Evangelist was sitting at our Lord's feet, writing. The saint asked him what he was writing. Our Lord answered for him. I am having every one of the devotions your congregation offered to Me yesterday, and all those they are going to offer these next two days, carefully noted down in this paper. And when I, to whom the Father has committed all judgment, shall faithfully render to every one after his death, "good" measure for all the labours of his pious works, and shall add moreover the measure " pressed

down" of My most salutary Passion and Death, whereby all man's merit is marvellously ennobled, I will take them with this paper to the Father, that He also, out of the omnipotence of His paternal kindness, may superadd to them His measure "shaken together and running over," for these benefits kindly done to Me in this persecution by which worldly men on these days harass Me. For, as none are equal to Me in faithfulness, much less can I omit to recompense My benefactors, seeing that even King David, who all his life through never omitted to heap kindnesses on his benefactors, yet, when he came to die, and committed his kingdom to Solomon, said to him, "Thou shalt show favour to the sons of Berzellai, the Galaadite, and they shall eat at thy table, for they came to meet me when I fled from the face of thy brother Absalom." A kindness shown to men in the time of adversity is more acceptable than in the time of prosperity; so I the more gratefully accept this fidelity which is shown to Me when the world is especially persecuting Me with sin.

The Blessed John, sitting and writing, seemed sometimes to dip his pen into an inkhorn which he held in his hand, and out of it to write black letters, and sometimes he dipped it into the loving Wound of the Side of Jesus, which stood open before him, and out of that he wrote red letters. Again, he touched up the red letters, partly with black and partly with gold. And the saint understood that by the black letters were indicated those works which the religious did from custom, as the fast which they commonly begin on this Monday. By the red letters were expressed those works which were done in memory of the Passion of Jesus Christ, with a special intention for the emenda-

tion of the Church. As to the red letters partly blackened and partly gilded, she understood that by those partly blackened were meant works done in memory of our Lord's Passion, to obtain for ourselves the grace of God, and other gifts concerning our own salvation. Those works, on the contrary, which were done purely for the glory of God, in union with Christ's Passion, and for the salvation of all men, renouncing all merit, reward, and favour, simply to give praise and show love to God, were expressed by the red letters, partially gilded. For although the foregoing works obtain from God a copious remuneration, those which are done purely for the love of God's praise are of much greater merit and dignity, and confer upon a man an infinitely greater augmentation of eternal bliss.

She then perceived that after every two paragraphs there was a vacant place, and she asked our Lord what that denoted. He replied: "As it is your custom to serve Me at this season with devout desires and prayers in memory of My Passion, I have first the thoughts and then the words, by which you serve Me, carefully written down, every one of them. The vacant place means this, that the works which you do, you are not accustomed to do, like the thoughts and words, in memory of my Passion." The saint rejoined: "And how, O most loving God! can we laudably do this?" Our Lord replied: "By keeping all fasts, vigils, and other regular observances in union with my Passion. And whensoever you refrain yourself in seeing, hearing, speaking, and the like, always offer it to Me in union with that love whereby I refrained all My senses in My Passion. With one glance I could have terrified all My adversaries, with one word I could have con-

victed of falsehood all who contradicted Me; yet was I like a sheep led to the slaughter, with My head humbly bowed down, and My eyes fixed upon the ground; and before my judge I open not My mouth for so much as one word of excuse from the false charges laid against Me." The saint answers: "Teach me, O best of teachers, at least one thing which I may do especially in memory of Thy Passion." Our Lord replied: "Take, then, this practice, to pray with your arms extended, thus expressing the form of My Passion to God the Father, for the emendation of the Universal Church, in union with that love wherewith I stretched out My hands upon the Cross." And she said: "And as this is not a common devotion, should I seek out secret places to practise it in?" And our Lord answered: "This custom of seeking out secret places pleases Me well, and is a fresh adornment to the work, as the gem adorns the necklace. Yet," He added, "if any one should bring this devotion of praying with extended arms into common use, he need fear no contradiction, and he will pay Me the same honour as one pays a king who solemnly enthrones him."

What is it, then, for which I am pleading? Only for this: that you should not altogether cut yourselves off from the glory of God, as if it was no concern of yours, and that you and He were not in partnership! This is really all. God is going to give you His glory for your own in heaven to all eternity. Surely you cannot altogether disclaim connection with it now: surely its interests very much concern you; its success must be your success, and its failure your failure too. You cannot stand aloof from the cause of Jesus on earth, and even keep up a sort of armed neutrality

with God, when you desire as soon as ever you die, without so much as tasting the sharpness of purgatory, to be locked in His closest embrace of unutterable love for evermore. Yet this is the plain English of the lives of most Catholics. And can any thing be more unreasonable, more ungenerous, more mean! And you wonder we have not converted England! Verily we do not look like a people who have come to kindle a fire upon the earth, nor to be pining because it is not kindled. Ah, Jesus! these are Thy worst wounds. I think lightly of the ruddy scars of Thy hands and feet, of the bruised knee and the galled shoulder, of the thousand-wounded head and the wide-open heart. But these wounds!—the wounds of coldness, neglect, unpraying selfishness!—the wounds of the few that were once fervid and now are tepid, of the multitudes that never were fervent, and so cannot even claim the odious honours of tepidity!—the wounds wherewith Thou wert wounded in the house of Thy friends!—these are the wounds to be wiped with our tears, and softened with the oil of our affectionate compassion. Blessed Lord! I can hardly believe Thou art what I know Thou art, when I see Thy people wound Thee thus! And my own wretched heart! It, too, lets me into sad secrets about man's capability of coldness, and his infinity of ingratitude. Alas! the concluding chapters of the four Gospels,—they read like a bitter jest upon the faithful! And then, we live as if we would petulantly say, "Well, we cannot help it. If Jesus chose to do and to be all this, it is his own affair: we only wanted absolution; we only wanted a machine to be saved by—a locomotive into heaven—the cheapest and roughest that would do the work, and land us at the terminus. You devout

people in reality stand in the way of religion. It may be hard for us to define enthusiasm; but you surely are enthusiasts. What we mean is, you are all heart and no head. Mere heat will not do instead of talent. Earnestness is not theology. There are other things to be done in life besides going to mass and confession. How can we have confidence in people who let themselves be run away with by religious fervour? All this incarnation of a God, this romance of a Gospel, these unnecessary sufferings, this prodigal bloodshedding, this exuberance of humiliations, this service of love, this condolence of amorous sorrow; to say the truth, it is irksome to us; we are not at home in it at all; the thing might have been done otherwise; it was a matter of debtor and creditor; every one is not a poet; every one cannot take to the romantic. Really there must be a mistake in the matter. God is very good, and His love is very well in its way. Of course He loves us, and of course we love Him. But really, by a little practical common sense, and a few wholesome reasonable precepts, and a strictly conscientious discharge of our relative duties, might we not put this tremendous mythology of Christian love, with all possible respect, a little on one side, and go to heaven by a plain, beaten, sober, moderate path, more accordant to our character as men, and to our dignity as British subjects? If 'the Anglo-Saxon race really fell in Adam,' why obviously we must take the consequences. Still, let the mistake be repaired in that quiet, orderly way, and with that proper exhibition of sound sense which are so dear to Englishmen."

Well! if it must be so, I can only think of those

bold words of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi: "O Jesus! Thou hast made a fool of Thyself through love."

O poor desolate glory of God! Thou art a foundling upon the earth! No one will claim thee, or acknowledge kindred with thee, or give thee a home. Cold as the world is, and pitiless the pelting of incessant sin, thou liest crying at our doors, and men heed thee not. Poor homeless glory! earth was meant for thee once as much as heaven, but there have been robbers abroad, and it is no safe travelling for thee along our roads now. But there are some few of us still who have pledged ourselves to Heaven, that from this hour we will take thee to our own homes, as John took Mary; "henceforth our substance is thy substance, and all that we have is thine."



CHAPTER IV.

Intercessory Prayer.

LET us see what goes to the saving of a soul, and what is involved in its being saved. In the first place, it was absolutely necessary that God should become man, in order that that soul should be saved, according to the dispensation of God. It was absolutely necessary that Jesus should be born, teach, act, pray, merit, satisfy, suffer, bleed, die, for the saving of that single soul. It was necessary that there should be a Catholic church, faith, sacraments, saints, the Pope, and the sacrifice of the Mass, for that one soul. It was necessary that there should be a supernatural substance or quality, a marvellous participation of the Divine Nature, called sanctifying grace, and that on this should be accumulated loving acts and impulses of the Divine Will, in the shape of manifold actual graces, preventing, accompanying, following, and efficacious, else that soul cannot be saved. Martyrs must die, doctors must write, Popes and councils must

expose and condemn heresy, missionaries travel, priests be ordained, for the safety of that single soul. When all these preparations are completed, and by an act of merciful omnipotence that soul is created out of nothing, then there must be a guardian angel appointed over it; all through its life Jesus must be occupied about it; Mary must have a great deal to do with it; all the angels and saints must pray and interest themselves about it. To every good thought, pious word, and devout action, and, of course, they soon come to be innumerable, a participation of the Divine nature, grace must concur. Unseen evil spirits have to be warded off from it, and foiled in their attempts upon it. Hourly temptations have to cause more or less emotion among its advocates in heaven. Every attribute of God vouchsafes to legislate for its advantage, so that it plays upon them all like one who fingers the keys of a musical instrument. The Precious Blood has to be communicated to it through extraordinary sacraments, which are full of mystery, and were invented both as to form and matter by our Lord Himself. All sorts of things, water, oil, candles, ashes, beads, medals, scapulars, have to be filled with a strange undefinable power by ecclesiastical benedictions in its behalf. The Body, Soul, and Divinity of the Incarnate Word have to be communicated to it over and over again till it becomes quite a common occurrence, though each time it is in reality a more stupendous action than the creation of the world. It can speak up to heaven, and be heard and obeyed there. It can spend the satisfactions of Jesus as if they were its own, and can undo bolts and bars in purgatory, and choose by its own determinate will whom it

will liberate and whom it will pass over. And all the time it is so near to God, and its heart is a place so sacred and so privileged, that none but God Himself can communicate grace to it, not even the angels, nor the Mother of God herself, blessed throughout all ages.

All this goes to the salvation of a soul. To be saved it has to be God's child, God's brother, and to participate in God's nature. Now see what is involved in its being saved. Look at that soul yonder that has just been judged; Jesus has this instant spoken; the sound of His sweet words has hardly died away; they that mourn have scarcely yet closed the eyes of the deserted body. Yet the judgment has come and gone; all is over; it was swift but merciful; more than merciful; there is no word to say what it was. It must be imagined. One day, please God! we shall experience it. That soul must be very strong to bear what it is feeling now. God must support it, or it will fall back into nothingness. Life is over. How short it has all been. Death is done with. How easy was its passing sharpness. How little the trials look, how puny the sorrows, how childish the afflictions! And now something has happened to it, which is to be for evermore. Jesus has said it. There can be no doubt about it. What is that something? Eye has not seen, nor ear heard. It sees God. There is stretched before it an illimitable eternity. Darkness has melted from before it. Weakness has fallen off from it. Time has vanished, that cramped it so. There is no ignorance. It sees God. Its understanding is inundated with unspeakable delights; it is strengthened by unimaginable glory; it abounds in that Vision to which earthly science is an illiterate stupidity. The will is

flooded with love; excessive happiness thrills through every affection. As a sponge is filled with the sea, so it is filled with light, beauty, bliss, ravishment, immortality, God. These are foolish words, lighter than feathers, weaker than water. They are not a shadow of what it feels. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, heart has not conceived. There it is on the threshold of it all; the same soul that but a moment ago was sobbing in pain, feeble as an unmanly child. There can be no mistake about it.

But not only so. There is not the slightest risk of its being forfeited. All is sure. All is its own, its very own, inalienable, and for ever. Sin can never come nigh it. Imperfection cannot breathe upon it. It knows no change, though its variety is infinite. It knows no inequality, though its joys are multitudinous and its delights innumerable. It is crowned king, and for ever. And the empire of all this magnificence, how cheaply has it been purchased! Those transient toils and cares of life, which grace turned into contentments, and love to real pleasures! And now, here is this come, the light of glory, and the beauty of the Everlasting Vision! It would appear but a dream; only that the marvellous calm of the soul tells of the power and the depth of its new life. Its ability to bear its own consciousness is the gage of its freshness and its immortality. And all this is involved in the saving of a soul! How wonderful is the world if we remember how many of its inhabitants die every moment of the day and night; and there is probably never a moment in which there is not some soul in this predicament, just judged, its sentence favourable, and its eyes opened on the incommunicable beauty and goodness

of God. O dull and weary, weary and dull! This is all we can say, when we turn our thoughts back to our own petty cares, teasing temptations, vexatious self-love, annoying littleness, ungenerous shabbiness with God! He has gone, is judged, it is well with him! Oh how well! And we still here. Our great risk yet to be run! O dull and weary, weary and dull!

Yet a few minutes ago, and that soul was not secure. There was a desperate contest going on, a pitched battle between heaven and hell, and heaven seemed at a disadvantage. The sufferer was patient enough to merit any thing that could be merited. But God put the last gift, the ultimate grace, final perseverance, beyond the reach of merit; and so seemed almost to throw the victory into the hands of the enemy. It was a terrific moment. All was at stake. All that had gone to the saving of that soul, from eternity up to that hour, was on the point of being lost and frustrated for ever; it is lost, it is frustrated, and for ever, almost every minute, perhaps quite every minute, all the world over. All, too, that was to be involved in the saving of that soul just then ran the risk of never being attained. Can risk, even in idea, go beyond this risk? And Jesus stood by, watching the turnings of the battle, how it would go. The beatings of His Sacred Heart might have been heard in the silence of the moment. He had suspended His own sweet and easy law, whereby, because of His merits, we can merit also. Although He Himself had merited for us the gift of final perseverance, and whosoever receives that grace receives it for the sole merits of our Lord, yet it seemed as if He had given that moment up to the sheer sovereignty of

the Divine Majesty. It was thrown, so it appeared, on the great, overpowering, limitless might of the mercy of the Undivided Trinity. One law alone is left unfettered. It is on purpose. The law of prayer, intercessory prayer. You are of kith and kin to that dying man, or you are his enemy; you are his priest, or his nurse, or his benefactor; you are his neighbour, or you are a thousand miles away; you know him well, or you never heard of his existence, or dreamed of his agony. It matters not. The victory has been left to you. The matter is in your hands. His soul hangs on your prayers. Jesus has decreed that you, not He, (if I may say so untrue a thing,) are to save that soul. You are to put the crown on all that has gone to his salvation. You are to put the crown on all that is involved in his salvation. You may never know it, or at least not till you are judged yourself. Yet, in the communion of saints, and in the unity of Jesus, you are to be the saviour of that uncertain soul, the victor of that unsettled strife!

But what is prayer? The mystery of prayer? We have need to ask the question if it involves so great a responsibility, and can do so great a work, and if it be in truth a precept that we must pray for others as well as fer ourselves. There are many things which go to make up a true account of prayer. First, we must consider who we are who pray. None could have a more ignoble origin. We were created out of nothing, and we came into the world with the guilt and shame of sin already on our souls, and the burden of a hideous penalty which eternal lamentation never could remit. To this our original disgrace we have added all manner of guilt and shame, of treason and rebellion, of irritability and disrespect, of our own. There are no words

which would exaggerate our malice, no description which would convey a fair idea of our helpless ignorance. Every thing about us was little to begin with, and we have made it immeasurably less. It is hard to conceive ourselves worse than we are; so much so that it is necessary to make it a duty to be patient and forbearing with ourselves quite as much as with others. Then, next we must consider who it is to whom we pray. The infinitely blessed Majesty of God, than which nothing can be conceived more good, more holy, more pure, more august, more adorable, more compassionate, more incomprehensible, or more unutterable. The very thought of God takes away our breath. He is Three living Persons. We live, and move, and breathe in Him. He can do what He wills with us. He is no further bound to us than He has graciously and piteously chosen to bind Himself. He knows every thing without our telling Him or asking Him. Yet it is to Him we pray. Next, let us think where it is we pray. Whether it be a consecrated place or not. It is in God Himself. We are in the midst of Him, as fishes are in the sea. His immensity is our temple. His ear lies close upon our lips. It touches them. We do not feel it; if we did we should die. It is always listening. Thoughts speak to it as loudly as words; sufferings even louder than words. His ear is never taken away. We sigh into it even while we sleep and dream.

Next, let us ask, whence comes the value of our prayers? They are fleeting words; fugitive petitions. There is nought in us to give ground for a hearing, except the very excess of our unworthiness, and, therefore, the extremity of our need. Else, why should our

prayers be in the Creator's ear more than the roaring of a lion, or the querulous complaining of the plover, or the cry of the suffering beast run down by the hunters? Their value comes principally from this—that God Himself has vouchsafed to become a man, has lain out upon the inclement mountains, and spent the night in prayer. He mixes us up with Himself; makes our cause His, His interests ours, and we become one with Him. So by a mysterious communion the work of His prayers runs into our prayers, the wealth of His enriches the poverty of ours, the infinity of His touches, raises, and magnifies the wretchedness of ours. So that when we pray, it is not we who pray, but He who prays. We speak into our Heavenly Father's ear, and it is not our voice, but the voice of Jesus, like His Mother's voice, that God vouchsafes to hear. Or rather, the Eternal vouchsafes to be like Isaac in his blind, old age. His younger son kneels before Him for His blessing, with license to play his elder brother's part. "The voice indeed is the voice of Jacob," and it is not he whom I will bless, "but the hands are the hands of Esau," roughened with the toil of the world's redemption. And he says with Isaac: "Come near Me, and give Me a kiss, My son." And immediately, as He smells the fragrant smell of His garments, for it is of a truth the stole of Christ, "blessing him, he says: Behold the smell of My son is as the smell of a plentiful field;" and so He filleth him with blessings. Neither is this an end of the inventions of his paternal love. For, we must next inquire with whom it is we pray. Never alone; of this we are sure, whenever we rightly pray. There is One dwelling in us who is coequal, co-eternal God, proceeding from the Father and

the Son. He forms the word in our hearts, and then puts music in our cry, when we exclaim, "Abba, Father!" He is our "access to the Father." He "strengthens us with might unto the inward man." He makes us "speak to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father;" He is the Spirit in whom "we pray at all times, by all prayer and supplication, and watch in the same, with all instance and supplication for all the Saints." He is the Spirit "who helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings: and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the Spirit desireth." Oh then does not the mystery of prayer deepen and deepen upon us?

Next, look at the incredible ease of prayer. Every time, place, posture, is fitting; for there is no time, place, or posture, in and by which we cannot reverently confess the Presence of God. Talent is not needed. Eloquence is out of place. Dignity is no recommendation. Our want is our eloquence, our misery our recommendation. Thought is quick as lightning, and quick as lightning can it multiply effectual prayer. Actions can pray; sufferings can pray. There need no ceremonies; there are no rubrics to keep. The whole function is expressed in a word; it is simply this,—the child at his father's knee, his words stumbling over each other from very earnestness, and his wistful face pleading better than his hardly intelligible prayer.

Then consider the efficacy of prayer. We have only to pray for lawful things, to pray for them often and perseveringly, and to believe we shall receive them, and receive them too, not according to the poverty of our foolish intentions, but according to the riches, and wisdom, and munificence of God; and it is an infallible truth that we shall receive them. God is at our disposal. He allows us this almost unbounded influence over Him, not once or twice, not merely on feasts or great occasions, but all our lives long. Are there any of the mysteries of grace sweeter than this? We read of one of the saints, that so availing were her prayers supposed to be, people came from all quarters to beg her to recommend their necessities to God. She, meanwhile, heard them and forgot them. She was immersed in contemplation, saw only the Divine Attributes, and had no thought but for the Lover of her soul. She was amazed, then, when crowds came continually to thank her for the answers that had come to her prayers on their behalf, and in an ecstasy she spoke her wonder in the ear of Jesus. "Daughter," replied our dearest Lord, "your will is always and only to do My will, and I will never let you vanquish Me in love; and, therefore, My will is to do your will, even when you have forgotten that you ever willed it." See what manner of Lord He is with whom we have to do!

Then, last of all, it is not for ourselves alone He lets us pray, but for others also. Nay, He expressly commands us to make intercessory prayer. Through His apostle He speaks with that positive and unusual form, "I desire first of all that supplications, prayers, inter-

cessions, and thanksgivings, be made by men."* And in the passage quoted above from the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, when the apostle says, "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the Spirit desireth;" he adds, "because He asketh for the Saints according to God." Thus the inestimable privilege, the mysterious gift of prayer, is given to us not merely for our own necessities, but that we may use it for the temporal and spiritual good of others. How strict an account shall we have to render for so great a favour, and how careful we should be that this power should not be intrusted to us in vain! Whatever other talents God may not have given to us, this one, without doubt, He has given to us. There is no distinction of persons. Young and old, rich and poor, learned and simple, priest and lay, religious and secular, we are all of us bound to the practice of intercessory prayer. Wo unto us if we hide our talent, or venture to return it to our Judge at the last unfruitful! Let each one examine himself, and see what time he has given hitherto to this devotion, and whether the past is in this respect altogether what he would have it be. To pray always is a hard precept, and one we can only come to by time and habit, as well as by gift and grace. But the thing is to find that the older we grow the more we pray, and the more we pray the more our prayer takes the line of intercession for the souls of others.

Perhaps, never while we are on earth shall we realize the heavenly might of prayer, nor the exceeding riches of that treasure, which now, alas! we make

* 1 Tim. ii. 1.

so light of, seeing not how thereby God's glory is so much within our power. Oh, what might we not do by prayer! What might we not do in every remotest corner of the earth, in the cells of purgatory, and in the open courts of heaven! Yet the times are against prayer; the spirit of the age is against it; the habits of our countrymen are against it. Oh, for faith in prayer! for only faith in prayer! for faith in simple prayer! and the interests of Jesus shall spread like a beneficent conquest all over the world, and the glory of God shall beautifully cover the earth as the abounding waters cover the bed of the sea, and the choirs of redeemed souls shall multiply and multiply, till the Good Shepherd should be, were it any other than He, overladen with the sheaves of His prolific Passion! Heaven opens sometimes, and gives us a glimpse of this potency of prayer. See how it opened on St. Gertrude.* She was divinely instructed that as often as the angelic salutation is devoutly recited by the faithful on earth, three efficacious streamlets proceed from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, most sweetly penetrating the Blessed Virgin's heart. Then from her heart again with efficacious impetuosity, they seek their fountains, and break at the foot of God's throne, as a sunny wave breaks upon a rock, leaving her most powerful after the Father, most wise after the Son, and most benignant after the Holy Spirit. These streams, while the Ave Maria is being said, flow around the Blessed Virgin superabundantly, and with potent impetus, and on the other hand flow back again upon her most holy heart. So with marvellous delectation, I am

* Rev. l. iv. c. 12.

using St. Gertrude's words, they seek their fountain first, and then redounding back, bright drops of joy, and bliss, and eternal salvation, are sprinkled over all the persons of the saints and angels, nay, more, over those who on earth are then commemorating that same salutation, whereby is renewed in every one all the good which he has ever up to this time received through the most salutary Incarnation. Yet, what more easy than to say a devout Hail Mary? And if this be true of the Ave, what also of the Pater, and the Credo, and the Missal prayers, and ejaculations from the Gospel? Do we know what we are doing, and where we are living, and what is all around us, and how far our influence goes, and where our responsibilities end? And have we measured our privileges, and taken the height of our dignity, and fathomed the depths of grace? We are beset by our own greatness. We work miracles, and know it not. We move the heavens, yet we ourselves are in thoughtless rest on earth. The mystery is too much for us; the problem too hard; the supernatural quite oppressive. But the comfort is, we shall do all things well, use all powers, satisfy all duties, be equal to all dignities, exhaust all blessings, if only we will serve Jesus with pure intention and out of love. Once go forth upon the earth, and live, and move, and breathe, speak, act, and think, joy and sorrow, toil and rest, welcome and suffer, *all for Jesus;* and we need have no other thought, no other rule. No atom of what we are, or of what we have received, or of what we can effect, will then be lost; all things conscious will be for Jesus; all things unconscious for Jesus too; all things possible for Jesus; and if there

were aught impossible for one in Christ, the very impossible would be all for Jesus too!

But let us apply our three instincts of the devout life to the practice of intercessory prayer. If we love our Heavenly Father, there is a gentle constraint upon us to hunger for His glory: and souls are His honour, and sin His dishonour. Now we may not be able to preach, or to write books, or to traverse distant lands as missioners, or to give money to send others there. It may be little indeed that of ourselves and by our actions we can do for God's glory or the conversion of souls. But intercession reaches everywhere. Neither time nor place bound it. Ignorance cannot keep it out, nor superstition silence it, nor sin refuse to stay within its influence. Wherever grace can come, prayer can reach, and that is wheresoever God's omnipotence extends, save and except that one place whence hope has been commanded to withdraw. Not that God is not glorified there also; but it is a glory we worship with silence, fear, and a trembling hush of heart. It is not that glory of His which we are His fellow-workers in promoting. We hear of some land where God's glory is endangered. There is some country, perhaps, where the civil power is at variance with the Holy See, than which nothing is more adverse to God's glory, more injurious to the interests of Jesus, or more fatal to the cause of souls. Or, again, we read with burning eyes and heart of the spiritual destitution of the slaves or the aborigines in certain countries. Or of the persecutions and tiring vexations of the Catholic clergy under heretical dominion, or of the impenetrable provinces of China and Japan, or of Catholic cities of scandalous profligacy, or of the wily plots of an anti-

ecclesiastical diplomacy, or of the depression of the religious orders, or of idle, extravagant bishops, or of jealousy of missions and retreats, or of disedifying controversies and foolish parties and silly questions. There is no saying to what an extent God's glory is compromised by any one of these things. We may be the weakest and most obscure among the Church's children; yet we can reach all this by intercession, and reach it too with efficacy and power. We may work for it without interruption; our ordinary actions may go to it; we may do more than all the ambassadors and legates that ever were, and yet not for an hour be distracted from our profession or our trade. We shall never know, till it meets us at the judgment, a goodly show, a beautiful vision, how much glory we have thus gained for God, without cost, without toil, almost without advertence, yet with such infinite and eternal recompense.

In like manner also shall we by intercession advance the interests of Jesus. There is something very touching to our affections to see how our dear Lord has vouchsafed, if I may say it, to leave His work unfinished in order that our love of him may have the joy of finishing it. St. Paul might well say* that he rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossians, because thus he "filled up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in his flesh for the Lord's Body, which is His Church." It is a great artifice of our Saviour's love that He has chosen to be so dependent upon us for the harvest of His Cross and Passion; and we must have cold hearts indeed if it does not move

* Coloss. i. 24.

us. Take any one temptation from which you suffer yourself. How wearisomely it dogs you, how miserably it entraps you; how it is always wakeful, always fixing itself on every good work, devotion, penance, prayer! How tired you get of resisting, how often you unhappily consent, how still more often you are teased and disquieted because you cannot make out whether you have consented or not! Yet every moment of resistance is a supernatural act, a victory of grace, an interest of Jesus. Nay, so also is every sigh of sorrow over a fall, every ejaculation sent up, arrow-like, to heaven, every naming of Jesus or Mary on the confines and in the risk of sin. Now, how many thousands are there all the world over who are wearily fighting with the same temptation, and possibly under more disadvantageous circumstances than yourself? See then how many interests of Jesus you can reach by intercession in this single respect: and I am purposely selecting a very trifling matter, trifling, that is, in comparison of other things where our Blessed Lord is yet more concerned. Do at least as much as this; intercede for those who are being tempted with the same temptation as yourself. Intercession can shut up casinos, take away licenses of taverns, discountenance races, make it rain in Easter or in Whitsun-week, draw betting-offices down to bankruptcy, and ruin unspeakable haunts of sin. If we can do such an immense work for Jesus, with scarcely any trouble to ourselves, can we think we love Him if we are not doing it? The flesh may tremble at the knots of the scourge, and the temper chafe at the prickling of the hair-shirt, and the tired and imprisoned limbs rebel even against our sleeping a night in

our clothes; all this is intelligible; there may be love of Jesus with it all; it is only the old story of Peter's drowsiness: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. But how we can love Jesus, and not practise intercession, is unintelligible. The wonder is how, prayer being what it is, those who really believe, can ever leave off praying, can ever do any thing else but pray. This is the real wonder, if we only come to think of it. This is a greater mystery than prayer itself.

Then, again, if we have the saving of souls at heart, how can we be lukewarm in intercession? Here too so much can be done, done infallibly, and all with so much ease. How few preachers are holy men, and yet without unction what will their sermons be worth? And if the world is, as St. Paul says, to be brought into subjection to Christ by the foolishness of preaching, what is to be done, if by intercession we do not impetrate either earnestness for the preacher, or an unction with his words for the hearer's sake? Eloquence, a plague upon the word when we are talking of Jesus and of souls! has no gift or benediction. Its harvest is but the preacher's praise and the wasted time of the silly, gaping audience. God's blessing is the thing. Do you remember the story of that religious, a Jesuit I think, who was a famous preacher, and whose sermons converted men by scores? And it was revealed to him that not one of the conversions was owing to his talents or eloquence, but all to the prayers of an illiterate lay-brother who sat on the pulpit steps saying Hail Maries all the time for the success of the sermon. There is another story, a very strange one, I will not vouch for its being true, but I

well quote it for the sake of the wise teaching it contains. A certain religious, a very popular preacher, was expected one day in a convent of his order, where he was a stranger. In the afternoon he arrived, or rather an evil spirit who personated him arrived, to see what mischief he could do. It so happened that there was to be a sermon on hell preached that day by one of the monks; but he was ill, and unable to preach. So they asked this devil to preach on hell, which he did; and as may be supposed from his experience, a most wonderful sermon it was. However, on the arrival of the real preacher, the evil one was discovered, and was obliged by the sign of the cross to disclose himself and his malicious designs. Among other things he was asked, how it was not against his interests to preach such a frightening sermon about hell, as it would keep people from sin. "Not at all!" he replied; "there was no unction with it, so it could do no harm." Here again preaching is but one way by which intercession can reach souls. I merely give it as a sample. In many a convent, among porters and lay-brothers, there may turn out, when Jesus makes all things straight at the last, to have been many a Francis Xavier, many a Father Claver, many a St. Charles for reforming the clergy, a St. Thomas for writing books, and a St. Vincent of Paul for working the interests of Jesus in the towns and amid the country poor.

One of the most divine and striking characteristics of the Catholic religion is the communion of saints, the way in which every thing belongs to everybody, and nobody has any spiritual property of his own. The merits and satisfactions of our dear Lord, the

joys and woes of Mary, the patience of the martyrs, the perseverance of confessors, and the purity of virgins, they all belong to all of us. Just as the blood circulates from and to the heart all over the body, so in the Church there is no division or separation. Heaven, purgatory, and earth, it is all one body. We interchange our merits, we circulate our prayers, we pass on our joys, we infect with our troubles, we use each other's satisfactions as they come to hand. We have all sorts of relations with heaven, and we know exactly how to manage them. As to purgatory, we have a regular science, and endless practical methods for it, and we are quite at home in them. And on earth kith and kin, blood and country, Jew, Greek, Scythian, bond and free, it is all one. This is what strikes heretics as so very portentous about us; there is no other word than portentous for it. We talk of the other world, as if it was a city we were familiar with from long residence; just as we might talk of Paris, Brussels, or Berlin. We are not stopped by death. Sight is nothing to us; we go beyond it as calmly as possible. We are not separated from our dead. We know the saints a great deal better than if we had lived with them upon earth. We talk to the angels in their different choirs, as if they were, as they are, our brothers in Christ. We use beads, medals, crucifixes, holy water, indulgences, sacraments, sacrifices, for all this, as naturally as pen, ink, and paper, or axe and saw, or spade and rake, for our earthly work. We have no sort of distrust about the matter. We are all one household, and there is an end of it. The blessed Lord God is our Father; His dear Majesty is our affair; our Elder Brother created us, and has our own nature;

Mary is our mother; the angels and the saints are all the kindest and most familiar of brothers; so we go up and down stairs, in and out, and to each other's rooms, just as it may be; there is no constraint about it at all; the air of the place is simply an intense filial love of the Father whom we all adore; so that our reverence is a children's reverence, and our fear a children's fear. How can they understand this, who live outside the household? Must it not necessarily seem to them a system of human mysteries, an unscriptural fabrication? They are "strangers and foreigners;" how can they divine the ways, the feelings, the sympathies of the "fellow-citizens of the saints and the domestics of God?" They can read the words, but they can know nothing of the heat and life, the strength and the perception, the health and love which are in them; so that a vail is over their hearts, truly their hearts rather than their understandings, when Paul is read; for they who would understand the edifying of the body of Christ, must first "all meet into the unity of faith," and so needful is this right faith, that it is the "truth" that we "must do in charity in order that we may *in all things* grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, being compactly and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation of the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity."* Thus it is that intercessory prayer, practised as a system, persevered in and resorted to by a kind of instinct, has always been almost a note of the true Church, and

* Ephes. iv.

is even charged upon her by her opponents as part and parcel of pharisaical proselytism. Notre Dame des Victoires at Paris is at least a phenomenon which the history of heresy and schism has not up to this time exhibited. They who do not possess Christ cannot master the idea of the vicarious function of His Church. Where there is no Sacrifice, there will hardly be much intercession. This is another motive for our diligent and affectionate exercise of this immeasurable privilege of love.

Orlandini says of Father Peter Faber, that he embraced in the bosom of his charity the whole human race, without any exception, and had his hands full of business for everybody with God. The more lost and profligate a man was, the more his pity kindled toward him. And that he might put greater vehemence into his prayers, he excited and elevated them with the deepest reflections. When he prayed for people, he put them before himself, as redeemed with the Precious Blood of Christ, as Christ's heirs, as Christ's kingdom, so that he stirred up his own affectionate zeal by thus realizing their dignity and price, while at the same time he offered to God the merits of Christ and His Saints the more nobly and feelingly; until at length by this simple practice he accustomed himself to entertain quite a magnificent opinion (opinionem magnificam) of everybody. St. Catherine of Siena tells us that God said to her, "You ought with the utmost anxiety to pour forth prayers for all rational creatures, and for the mystical Body of Holy Mother Church, and for those whom I have given over to you to love with a singular affection." St. Gertrude also was told, "Whosoever says at least one Pater and Ave,

or any collect or psalm, on behalf, and in the name of, the universal Church, the Son of God presently accepts it with the deepest gratitude as the fruit of His most perfect Humanity, and giving thanks to God the Father for it, He blesses it, and multiplied by that benediction He distributes it to the Universal Church, for her profit to eternal salvation."

But let us now see for whom especially these intercessions should be offered. Spiritual writers give us different recommendations: I shall follow here, as so often before, the Jesuit Lancisius.*

1. For those who are in mortal sin, or out of the true Church. Thus the Eternal Father said to St. Catherine of Siena, "I affectionately entreat you to pray assiduously for the salvation of sinners, for whom I ask of you wrestlings and tearful prayers, that I may satisfy My longing to show them grace and mercy." When she heard these words she was greatly inflamed with Divine Love, and being as it were intoxicated and unable to contain herself, she cried out, "O Divine Mercy and Eternal Goodness! it is no wonder to me that Thou sayest to converted sinners returning unto Thee, 'I will remember no more the injuries you have done unto me;' but that Thou shouldest say so to the stiffnecked who persecute Thee daily with their iniquities, that Thou shouldest say, 'I will that you should affectionately pray for them, I long to show them mercy,' this is indeed a wonder." Again, God said to her, "You shall delight in the Cross, eating there, and ruminating by yourself the food of souls, to the glory and praise of My Holy Name, continually moaning with anxious heart over the death of the human race,

* ii. 29.

because you see it brought down to such misery as your tongue cannot express. For it is by this moaning and wailing of my friends that I make dispositions for showing mercy to the world. And this is what I am continually asking of you, and of My other friends; and this will be the sign that you love Me truly, and I on My side promise never to neglect your holy desires." Again, God complained to her thus: "See, My daughter, with what sins they strike Me, especially with self-love, whence every evil proceeds. Self-love has infected the world, as if it had drunk poison; it comes from pride, and holds every sort of evil in itself. Do you, therefore, My servants, prepare yourselves with mercy, supplications, and anxious desires, grieving over the offences committed against me, and also over the damnation of the sinners themselves, and so you will mitigate the wrath of My Divine judgment." Here you see is another practice hinted to us, prayer against self-love in all souls throughout the world. If you suffer from it yourself, pray for the deliverance of others from it. This is an artifice of the spiritual life which never fails.

We read in the life of St. Clare of Monte Falco, that she once prayed for a certain person who was laden with the guilt of great crimes, and had delayed his conversion now to the last years of his life. Once and again, when she began to pray, she felt herself repelled from prayer by a hidden violence, and she heard an interior voice telling her not to pray for that wretch, as she would not be heard. She returned, however, a third time to her prayer, and obtained his conversion in the following manner. She placed herself before Christ the Judge, as if she herself were

laden with all this man's sins, and, as so laden, she obliged herself to make satisfaction for him, and to bear all the punishment which the order of Divine Justice should desire and exact, until the Divine Goodness should deign to convert that soul. This act so pleased our Lord, that the obstinate sinner was suddenly converted, and led a good life from that time forth. St. Theresa gives this as a reason for founding her convents, that, as there are so many who offend God, nuns ought to pray for their conversion, and with especial assiduity for the defenders of the Church, and particularly for preachers, and other learned men who maintain its truth. Yepes tells us in his life of her, that she spent whole nights praying and weeping for the conversion of souls, especially those infected with heresy, and that she would have given a thousand lives to convert one soul. The whole forty years, during which she thus exercised herself in prayer, she asked nothing so much of God as the spread of His glory, and the augmentation of the Church; and she was willing to remain ever so long in purgatory, if only she could make God better known and loved by men. In a like spirit St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi earnestly recommended her nuns to pray ardently for the salvation of souls and the conversion of sinners; and she said this exercise was very pleasing to God, as well as profitable to their own salvation. And when our Blessed Lady sent St. Ignatius to the same St. Mary Magdalene to instruct her in the practice of humility, he ended his instruction with these words: "As the Incarnate Word constituted His apostles fishers of men, so has He appointed His spouses, that is, nuns, to make a prey of souls." We learn also from the case

of Father Giulio Mancinelli, the Jesuit, that God will have no narrowness in this matter; for, when he was accustomed to pray very often for the conversion of heathen and heretics, he had a vision of angels, wherein he learned that God would have him pray also for the conversion of the Jews.

2. For those who are in lukewarmness and tepidity. For these are on the very verge of great sins, and yet they are in a state of grace at present. Their necessity is great; and so they claim our charity. Their renewal to favour, if they fall, is very difficult, more so than the conversion of sinners, and so it is a great glory of God. Jesus has given them the first grace; He has converted them, and now He is on the point of losing them; His interests are in danger. As God has been pleased to reveal to us His special distaste for the lukewarm, so would it be very acceptable to Him if we made prayer and penance for the lukewarm one of our special devotions. Next to the devotion for the souls in purgatory, I should almost venture to rank this devotion for the renewal of the lukewarm. Our dear Lord! how He seems to suffer in them! And, if they be lost, what graces will have been in vain, what sacraments wasted, what a triumph for our Lord's enemy! I beg of you to think of this, and when you think of it, to think of me. It is a devotion of much love, and of many graces. And perhaps you may not have thought of it before.

3. The multiplication of saints and their final perseverance. The glory of God, the good of souls, and the interests of Jesus, are all implicated here; and that in so many and in such great ways, that I need hardly stop to point them out, they are so obvious. One saint

is worth a million of common Catholics. Our Lord said even a stronger thing to St. Theresa,—that one soul, not a saint, but *seeking* perfection, was more precious to Him than thousands living common lives. It is astonishing how unsupernatural we are, even in our devotions: and how we let natural principles and natural activity carry us away even in spiritual things, and when we are doing God's work. I remember a good religious telling me some years ago that in a town in the east of England, he and his people had picked out certain influential Protestants, of public notoriety, and prayed to God most earnestly for their conversion. Of course this was all right. However, no answer came. At last it struck him that there might be a little too much forcing of man's will upon God in the matter. He proposed, therefore, that they should change their prayers, and pray for those whom God saw fittest for grace: and all at once the blessed epidemic broke out in their own very town, and it was our Lord's sweet will to swell the mission there, where it had least been looked for. Thus, who can doubt that the keen commiseration for England, which some feel, is from God? And if the general and wide object of their intercession, and the unlikely look of the ugly mass of heresy, immorality, and superstition, tempt them to weary in their charity, why not pray God to send England or Ireland a saint, a real saint, and then the battle would be more than half won? What I mean is, that prayers often seem to get their answer quickest when they embody some supernatural principle. It looks as if God, here and now, set especial store by such acts of unworldliness and faith.

4. For all those the world over who are in various

necessities and tribulations, whether spiritual or temporal. Hear what Orlandini says of Father Peter Faber, whom St. Francis Xavier used to put into the litany of the Saints, and St. Francis of Sales to revere as if he were canonized. It increased the grief and sorrow of this tender-hearted man that the majority of people do not know how to refer their affairs and miseries to God, but rely upon human helps while they neglect divine ones. This vehemently stimulated his compassion, so that he himself laid before God the cares and calamities of all men, and became a suppliant for them in all their straits, troubles, misfortunes, and necessities, till at last he passionately desired, like another Moses, to have his hands always lifted up on high, to carry help and consolation to so many who were battling with suffering and sorrow, whether dead or living: he had pictured to himself the various vexations, calamities, diseases, pains, hunger, despair, want, and all the countless evils to which men are subject, and as a good and sedulous priest, to borrow the simile of St. Chrysostom, he pleaded all their causes with God, as if he had been appointed in some special way the common father of the whole world. It is quite incredible with what zeal he burned to be the minister of our dear Redeemer, and by Him to aid every one in all his griefs; nay, if it may be said, he yearned, in spite of his humility, to do miracles to relieve those evils the cure of which is beyond the bounds of nature.

5. For the necessities of our benefactors, among whom are to be reckoned our enemies, because they give us occasions of merit, and help us on the road to heaven. St. Agnes said to St. Bridget, "Nothing is more lovely, or more acceptable with God, than to love

those who injure us, and to pray for our persecutors." St. Chrysostom, speaking of David and Saul, tells us that "it is reckoned to us as martyrdom, if we count our enemy our benefactor, and do not cease to pray for him." It was revealed to Father Giulio Mancinelli, who was especially devoted to intercessory prayer, that he was one of seven, then (about 1603 A. D.) in the Church Militant, who above others, so as to be thus distinguished in the sight of God, prayed for all men. It was once given him in a vision to see the glory of St. Lawrence the martyr, and among other lights which he then received this was one,—that we ought earnestly to pray for our benefactors, not only because of the gifts and temporal goods conferred upon us, but because of the affection of charity with which they were given, and which is of greater esteem than the gifts themselves. Both are to be repaid, the gifts by labour and assiduity in prayer, the affection of charity by loving our benefactors and getting them grace from God. We must also in our gratitude respond to their intention for the Divine honour and love, for our benefactors bestowed their favours upon us with a view to God. So we in like manner, to recompense this their reverence, love, and tenderness toward God in the giving of alms, must wish well to them, and beg of God that they may be promoted to serve God more and more by works of charity.

6. For all those who are seriously occupied in the pursuit of Christian perfection, and for whatever they desire in order to that end, though it may involve pain and suffering. For this is the common appetite of the Saints, and it is lawful to ask it for them if they are rightly asking it for themselves; because it is good for

God's glory, for the interests of Jesus, and for the bringing to penance multitudes of souls. Thus St. Francis Xavier, when St. Jerome showed him in a vision at Bologna all he was to suffer, cried out, "More, O Lord, more!" Thus St. Theresa said, "Either to suffer or to die;" and St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, "Neither to suffer as now, nor yet to die, but to suffer more." Thus David exclaimed,* "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; burn my reins and my heart:" and Jeremias† prays with natural shrinking, yet with supernatural trust, "Correct me, O Lord, but yet with judgment, and not in Thy fury, lest Thou bring me to nothing:" and Saint Paul,‡ "I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ." And how unapproachably beautiful is that of Job,§ "Can an unsavoury thing be eaten that is not seasoned with salt? or can a man taste that which when tasted bringeth death? The things which before my soul would not touch, now, through anguish, are my meats. Who will grant that my request may come, and that God may give me what I look for? And that He that hath begun may destroy me, that He may let loose His hand and cut me off? And that this may be my comfort, that, afflicting me with sorrow, He spare not, nor I contradict the words of the Holy One. In what is my strength that I can hold out? or what is my end that I should keep patience? My strength is not the strength of stones, nor is my flesh of brass."

7. It may be added here that some writers recommend prayer for the increase of the accidental glory of

* Ps. xxv. 2. † x. 24. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 10. § vi. 6.

the blessed in heaven. For instance, when a religious prays that those of his order may live holily, or that some of them may come to be canonized, the founder (seeing it in God, or God making it known to him) gains an increase of accidental glory; it is in this sense priests pray in the Mass, that the sacrifice may profit the Saints to their honour. Thus Innocent III.* says, "Many, or rather most, think it not unworthy that the glory of the Saints should be capable of increase up to the day of judgment, and, therefore, that the Church may lawfully desire for them this increase of their glorification." Bellarmine, Suarez, Vasquez, and John Sanchez teach the same. Sotus gives the joy of the angels in heaven over the sinner doing penance as an instance of it. Our lady is said to have revealed to St. Thomas of Canterbury that her glory is always receiving new increments in heaven, that is, from the good works of her clients. So also men may pray for the increase of devotion to particular saints; and it was revealed to St. Gertrude that the blessed receive fresh accidental glory every time Communion is received on earth. I merely mention this practice to show how far the power and prerogatives of intercessory prayer extend.

8. There is another intercessory devotion of such great beauty, that the simple statement of it will be its sufficient recommendation. This is to be found in the life of Marie-Denise de Martignat, one of the first religious of the Visitation. She spent almost the first fifty years of her life in the courts of France and Savoy, but the spirit of the world never passed upon her

* De Celeb. Miss.

heart, any more than the smell of fire upon the garments of the three children in the fiery furnace. The way in which she fenced off the spirit of the world was as follows: she took a text of Scripture for each of the seven days of the week, in order to occupy her mind continually with the words of truth. Her choice of texts was remarkable. On Sunday she took the words,—I am come into the world to bring light, that he who believeth in Me may not abide in the darkness. On Monday:—He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. On Tuesday:—It is as hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, as to pass a cable through the eye of a needle; nothing, however, is impossible with God. On Wednesday:—My kingdom is not of this world, and the devil is called by Jesus the prince of this world. On Thursday:—I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me. On Friday: Now is the judgment of the world; and I, if I am lifted up, shall draw all things unto Me. On Saturday:—If you love Me, My father will give you another Paraclete, to abide with you eternally, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. From these seven fountains of truth, her soul was visited by such abundant lights as to the misery of this world, and the unsatisfactoriness of its honours and pleasures, that she had continually in her mouth the words of Solomon:—Vanity of vanities, all things under the sun are vanity! She used to say, that if a hermit had uttered these words, they would have been taken for the exaggeration of a contemplative; but that God having put them into the mouth of one of the greatest, richest, and

most peaceable of kings, they caused in her such a profound compassion for great people, because of the risk of their salvation, that she took the rich, high-born, and prosperous as the matter for a special devotion, and desired to communicate the same devotion to every one she met. "Ah!" she exclaimed, "they are hemmed round with no common misery; they go down to hell without thinking of it, because their staircase thither is of gold and porphyry. Great in this world, they let themselves have no leisure to reflect that soon they will be very little; having the habit of commanding others, they presume upon themselves, and live as if God, heaven, and the angels were under their obedience, as well as earth and men. How will they be disenchanted, when, in a moment, they shall discover themselves to have been, and now to be for ever, slaves of the devil; or if God shows them mercy, what a surprise to them to find themselves in the kingdom of heaven far below the poor and vile whom on earth they would not allow to come near them!"

Hence, during her whole life, she possessed this enlightened compassion for the rich, and made special intercession for them. She said it was a greater charity to pray for them than for those who were languishing in hospitals and prisons. She celebrated the feasts of the canonized kings, queens, princes, and princesses, with a particular reverence, and an unusual devotion. She declared that nothing ought at once to humble and encourage Christians more than the heroic sanctity of great people who have kept humility in the midst of glory, and have used this world as though they used it not. She was accustomed to fast on the vigils of these feasts, and all her prayers on those

days were for the salvation of great people. I do not know if it will seem so to others, but to me there is something extremely touching in this devotion, so truly spiritual, considerate, and heavenly.

It is in harmony with this her special devotion that we read toward the conclusion of her life, that one day when the Superioress asked her if it was worth while to ask a certain favour of a person of very high rank, she replied: "Yes! my dear mother, do it. I assure you it is a very great charity to princes and great people to make them do good works. The world, the flesh, and the devil make them do so many bad ones, that they will one day return more thanks to us who have been the cause of their giving alms, than we gave them for the alms we procured from them." Another time, when she saw the Superioress writing to a princess, she said: "My dear mother, please always put something in your letters to great people about the holy fear of God, or the sovereignty of the Divine Majesty, or the greatness of eternity, and the shortness of this life. For there are always so many flattering these poor great ones, and a day will come when they will wish it had not been so." When she heard of the death of Louis XIII., she said: "Alas! I saw that monarch born, I saw him baptized, I saw him crowned, I saw him married, I saw him reigning, and now he is no more!" Somebody asked her if she would pray much for him; she said: "Yes! more than people would believe; for, however well he lived, and however well he died, he may possibly have something still to satisfy for to the equitable justice of the King of kings. He is gone into a kingdom which is only conquered by the humble of heart. No one goes in there sceptre in

hand." She also said the Office of the dead every Monday for the souls of princes and princesses; and every Friday for the knights of Malta, and those who died in battle for the Church; and she often recited the Gradual Psalms for those in the army, lest they should acquire habits of vice in that which is not the best of schools for holy living, though it is far from having been unfruitful of saints.

A word on the time, place, and method of intercession. These may be left to every one's choice; the following are suggestions. 1. To have particular days in the week for particular objects, as 1. For the Pope. 2. For the Clergy and religious orders. 3. For all in mortal sin. 4. For all in their agony. 5. For the lukewarm. 6. For those in sorrow. 7. For those whom God wishes us specially to pray for. Or to have a scheme of thirty objects for the days of the month. 2. To note down objects in writing, and keep it in our missal or prayer-book, or on our priedieu. To visit the Blessed Sacrament, and go through this paper, meditatively, exciting affections of zeal for the Divine honour, and of loving solicitude for the interests of Jesus. 4. To agree with our Lord to take some word, or ejaculation, or offering, which shall stand for all our objects, and use it at mass and communion, in our thanksgiving, before and after meditation, rosary, and examen, &c. 5. If we are sleepless at night, or from any cause have short intervals of unexpected leisure in our ordinary occupations, to have recourse to intercession. And so practices might be multiplied almost infinitely. The best will be those which are the most simple, come naturally, and rise out of our usual devotional exercises; only remember that one of the objects

for which we came into this world was to make intercessory prayer.

Oh the unfathomable sweetness of this mystery of prayer! Do let me say it again. One of the ends for which we came into the world was to make intercession. One of the ends for which our blessed Saviour shed His Precious Blood was that we might make acceptable and efficacious intercession. One of the things that God is waiting for us to do now is intercession. Yet how much time do we habitually spend in the delightful exercise of this great privilege! How we talk of popes and cardinals, of bishops, priests, and religious orders! How we overflow with the prattle of devotional or ecclesiastical gossip! We have a criticism for everybody's conduct in every thing. We could teach them better. We could show them the right way. We take higher views, and burn with hotter zeal. We get an easy character for piety by talking much and fluently about God, and by making ourselves very tiresome to others by our fidgets about ecclesiastical plans and the interests of Catholicism. *Conversational* fidgets, for the most part, and stopping there; we are not to the fore, when doing, tedious doing is required. Oh yes! we have all of us got a psalm, and a prophecy, and a doctrine; the Corinthians could not come near us in the variety of our wisdoms and our gifts; we could beat them down; we could surprise St. Paul; so exuberant, so oracular, so necessary to God, His pope, and His church, does our talk show us to be, or at least show that we think ourselves to be! Now I wonder how much we pray. I wonder what proportion our secret intercession bears to our open criticism. I should fear it was very little; for I cannot help fan-

cying that if we prayed more we should feel that we prayed so little, that we should not dare, for shame's sake, to talk at all. I have a great notion of the spirit of concealment being something like two-thirds of practical Christianity. I will be bound our praying people lie hid among those who never tell us how deeply they are interested in Catholic affairs. The eye that is quick to see a fault, and the ear that loves to listen to criticism, and the tongue that brags,—these will be the signs of a praying soul,—when the rainbow comes to be the emblem of despair, and not before!

The whole duty of intercessory prayer, and our own discharge of it, may help us to one of those occasional revelations which are so profitable to our souls. Our spiritual life seems to be going on all safely and smoothly. We do not imagine ourselves to be saints. But we feel we are taking pains. We manage to keep ourselves in a state of grace. Nay, we have made distinct sacrifices for God, either in being converted to the faith, or in entering religion, or in embracing the ecclesiastical state, or in some way or other; and although we do not actually rest upon the meritoriousness of these sacrifices as though our predestination were finally and happily fulfilled by them, yet we never forget them, and the thought of them is a continual support to us. These are beginnings of something very bad. But our Lord comes to our rescue, and without any apparent cause a supernatural light is poured into our souls, illuminating every corner and hiding-place, and revealing to us, in a most startling way, *how very little after all we have done for God.* It is like the light of the Particular Judgment, which lays all our life with its actions and motives clearly before us in

one moment, so that God may be justified, and we pass a fair sentence on ourselves. Oh, how blessed are these little revelations! For out of them comes humility, and freshness, and strength, and joy in Jesus, and abandonment of self in the arms of God. We could not believe we did so little for God, if this gracious light did not flash it upon us in such a way that we cannot refuse to see, or doubt that we have seen it. Think of intercession, and see whether it may not bring you now another of these affectionate revelations.

It is difficult to have the better of our Lord in the strife of liberality and love. Of all the fruits of the Holy Ghost, none seems more desirable, because none is less earthly or more heavenly, than joy; and it is just this fruit which our Blessed Lord bestows on such as devote themselves to intercession. This is very observable. There is a certain sunniness and lightheartedness about them for which there seems no ordinary cause, except that it is like the sweet lightening of the spirit which comes after a kind and unselfish action. This may partly be the reason. But there is another also. We see not the fruit of our intercession; the spirit of prayer escapes out upon the earth, and is everywhere like the hidden omnipresence of God. It is out of our sight. Nay, it is not like a series of distinguishable works. We hardly remember how much intercession we have made. Who can count the sighs he has sent up to God, or the wishes without words which the tongue of his heart has told into the ear of Jesus? And so from the fruit being hidden, vainglory attaches to it less than to almost any other devotion. However this may be, sweetness and consola-

tion, submissively desired, are beyond all doubt great helps to holiness; and whosoever desires to joy in God, and to abound in all joy and consolation in the Lord, to be gay and prompt in serving Jesus, to be patient with life because of the desire of death, and to be equable in all things, which is not far from being holy in all things, let him throw away himself and his own ends, and wedding the dear interests of Jesus and of souls, betake himself to intercession, as if it were his trade, or he had as much to do with it as his guardian angel has to do with him. Joy is the especial recompense of intercession. It is part of His joy, who rejoices in the harvest of His Passion. What stirs in our hearts has come to us from His! It was first in His, before it was in ours, and an angel's presence would be less desirable than is that little taste of the Redeemer's joy.

CHAPTER V.

The Riches of our Poverty.

IF we are in earnest about our souls, with a quiet fidelity to those duties, practices, and devotions, which obedience sanctions to us, our love of God increases without our knowing or feeling it. It is only now and then, in certain temptations, or on great feasts, or sometimes without apparent cause, that God allows us to perceive that we have really made some progress, and that we care more for Him and less for any thing else but Him, than we used to do. One sign to us of this increase of love is the growing sense of our own unworthiness, and of the extreme littleness of every thing we do. It becomes a pain to us that we have so little to offer to God, and that our service of Him is after all so wretched and ungenerous. The more we know Him, and the more we approach to thoughts at least a little more worthy of His blessed Majesty, the more this feeling increases upon us, and, as I say, becomes a pain. It is this which drives the saints to yearn for suffering and to pray for crosses. The common cares, the ordinary weariness of life, are

not enough to satisfy them, because they do not give them room for their heroic love. They want, a vain yet loving strife! to keep pace with the generosity of Jesus. Why should they do so little for him? Why should they be thus imprisoned and kept in by the littleness of every thing round about them? If sin was once a misery to them, now their inability to love God royally and magnificently, to spend themselves and to be spent for Him in glorious sacrifices—this has become a greater misery to them. Like Areuna, they would give to their King as kings give, with full hands and prodigal expenditure. When God Himself gives them quiet times, and multiplies their joy and peace, they turn against Him, so to speak, with amorous complaint, "Nay, but I will buy it of thee at a price, and I will not offer to the Lord my God holocaust free-cost."* Then they say strange things, that sound undoctrinal, about their being ready to endure all the pains of hell to all eternity, if only they can thereby promote God's glory one little degree; and they talk of disinterested love until they almost seem to incur the censures of condemned propositions.

These thoughts are not for us. They would be unreal in us. But we too, in our measure, feel this pain. We want to do more for Jesus, and our own cowardice when we come to the point is a keen misery and a sensible shame to us. "Copious redemption," says the Psalmist, "there is with God;" and it is this copiousness of our redemption which at once stimulates our love, and makes it discontented with itself. All that Jesus has done for us has been done with such un-

* 2 Kings xxiv. 24.

necessary abundance, with such outpouring of affection, with such supernatural profuseness of mercy and compassion, that it is plain at every step, in each separate mystery of the Incarnation, that what He wants is, not our salvation only, but our love also. The same longing and luxury (deliciæ) to be with the children of men, His creatures, which would have led Him, if man had never fallen, to come to us in an impassible body, and of the same Virgin Mother, now that we have fallen and He has had to come to us as a passible Redeemer, seems only to run riot all the more in the depths of its own tenderness and love. He cannot pardon, but He must at the same time adopt as sons. He cannot cleanse us from sin without making us heirs of heaven. He cannot absolve from the past, but at the same time He stores us with grace for the future. Every gift He gives is double, treble, or a hundred-fold. One drop of blood would have done, and He shed every drop. Grace would have sufficed for His sacrament of love, but He must needs give Himself, Body, Soul, and Divinity. The Blessed Sacrament is a superfluous mercy, an unnecessary love. Only that to show most love and to get most love—this was what was intended. This is His way. And as we get to know Him and to love Him more, we want it to be our way also. And the little we can do seems so little, so very little!

Now, from what we know of Him we may be sure He would never leave us in this predicament. He desires nothing so much as our love; He would never leave us without adequate means of loving Him. If an earthly father knew that his child was longing to make him a present, but had not the means, with what

prompt hand and overflowing heart would he furnish him with the means! Will Jesus do less? That at least is not His way. Look at what He did to His Mother at the Presentation. No creature, nor all creatures put together, ever loved God as she did at that hour. And never yet had that ever-blessed and most dear Majesty been worshipped with an adequate act of worship. The angels, with all the varied powers and faculties and manifold affections of their nine choirs, had been casting their gifts before the throne with fiery love and burning songs of praise these thousands of years, and the Divine Complacency had mercifully stooped to feed itself upon them. Mary herself, the lowly and the chaste, was a more sweet act of worship to the Most High, and all the everlasting praise of the heavenly hierarchies would fill up but a little corner in her Immaculate Heart. Yet even she fell short, and oh how far short! Sweet Mother! she knew this well; none knew it better; and if ever love could have run wild in the blessed and worshipful calmness of her immense virtue, as it did with her children the saints, and their weaker grace, she might have wished to be annihilated, if so only she could have worshipped God with a sufficient love. But Jesus came to the rescue of her love. He put Himself into her arms, and said to her, "Offer Me! I am equal to My Father! I am a gift, not worthy only but of the selfsame price and value, infinite, unutterable as Himself!" Now for the first time shall the most Holy Trinity have an act of fitting worship. Every Attribute shall be glorified, every perfection crowned with a crown of love and adoration, every mercy be recompensed; every debt and duty of every

creature shall be satisfied; nay, the love and worship of all possible creatures shall be by one act outrun and overpassed for ever! Oh joy, exceeding joy, yea, to those who love our most dear God, a joy beyond all other joys! And heaven was silent, and the angels with spirits gushing with love looked down adoringly, and on this earth of ours in Sion's temple, Mary took her Babe into her arms, and held Him up, and gave Him with all the might and impetus of self-sacrifice to the Eternal Father. And so she, the first of all creatures who did so, worshipped God aright, and gave due glory to the Eternal. And now, oh mysterious love, whereby our dear Lord will persist in making Himself so common! there is not a moment, day or night, on this round globe of earth, that the same Child, the Living Host, is not being elevated by mortal hands between earth and heaven, here, or at our antipodes!

Thus, also, does He come to the rescue of our love as well. He can do so in two ways. First of all, by giving to the littleness of our actions an immensity of value by uniting them to His own, and letting the worth of His own flow into them. Of this hereafter. Secondly, He can do so by treating us as he treated Mary, giving us Himself and all that belongs to Him to do with what he will, and to offer to God, as and when we please. And it is of these riches of our poverty I am going to speak at present.

It is really very difficult to believe our own greatness and nobility in Christ. The catalogue of our privileges always seem to be only a sort of devout exaggeration. Take yourself at any given moment, whether of pain and weariness, or of satisfaction and sensible devotion,

and you will see how difficult it is not so much to hope, as to believe that some day you will really be saved, dead, judged, crowned, in Heaven, and eternity before you. It is not so much that you fear the opposite, as that the greatness of the reward, the infinity of the bliss, and the contrast with your present misery and lowness, are more than you can take in. You meditate on Heaven, and then you think, Will there be a moment, or an hour, while men on earth are going on as usual, and I shall be thus, in the fixed possession and enjoyment of all this? And you smile, not exactly with incredulity, but as Sara smiled when she heard the angel say that she should have a son. So in its measure is it with the inheritance we have in Christ even when on earth. It seems too much. Yet St. Paul says to the Corinthians,* "All things are yours, whether it be the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; for all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And again to the Hebrews,† he says, not you shall hereafter, but you are already, "come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born who are written in the heavens, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel." When Mary rules with her sweet sceptre of ever-granted prayer over the empire of the Sacred Heart, it is our kingdom over which she is the queen. All it is and all it has is ours, for "all things

* 1 Cor. iii. † xii. 22.

are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's." For these are our treasures, which He has given us, having won them for us with His Blood: His own Sacred Humanity, Body and Soul, His Childhood, Hidden Life, Ministry, Passion, Blessed Sacrament, and Session at the Father's Right Hand; His Mother, all she is or has; His countless angels beautiful and strong; all the good works and penances of earth; all the masses that are said; and the countless sufferings of those in purgatory; the graces which the lost had and did not correspond to; the sanctity of the Saints, Joseph, the Baptist, the Apostles, and the rest; all the praise of birds and beasts and the orderly elements; all that possible creatures could do; God's past mercies, through the Old Testament History downward; and the love which the Three Divine Persons bear to each other, and the incommunicable love wherewith God loves Himself eternally.

These things are ours in Christ. Oh surely a fair and magnificent domain! These things He puts into our hands, just as He put Himself into Mary's hands at the Presentation, that we may be able to satisfy our love. What blessed occupation for our time! what heaven begun on earth! Every one of these things we can use, as freely as if it were our own, for three distinct purposes; and we can merit by them all, as by our own actions, for the oblation of them is our own. He gives us them to be offered. First, we may use them to make acts of love, and secondly, to make acts of thanksgiving. Of these two uses I shall speak hereafter. And thirdly, we may use them for intercession, and this is what we have to do with at present. If we have laid well to heart the lessons of the last chapter,

we shall feel so drawn to the blessed practice of intercession, that we shall be discontented with our own means of interceding. We shall feel that our dry, bald petitions, our cold words, our slovenly devotions, what with the distraction of our employments, and what with the hardness of our hearts, can never satisfy the loving desires we feel to promote by intercession the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the good of souls. See then! Jesus puts all these things into our hands as weapons of intercession. He fills our quiver full of these arrows, dipped in potent balms, to wound His Sacred Heart, which He uncovers to us for our aim. If aimed with devout intention, they must reach the mark, and if they reach it they must wound infallibly. As there are no bounds to His love of us, so does He seem bent that there shall be almost no bounds to our possibilities of loving Him. Love would not be love, if having these treasures it did not use them. When, therefore, we desire to intercede with God for something which is to His greater glory, we can offer to Him any of these things, presenting to Him the actions themselves, that they may appease His anger and stir His compassion toward us. The mere offering, with a devout intention, is a great thing, and avails much, just as the silent presence in heaven of the Five Wounds which our Lord deigned to keep after His resurrection, is said by theologians to be our Lord's intercession, continually pleading with the Father, though our Lord no longer prays for us as He did on earth. But we ought not to stop here with the actions only. We should endeavour to unite ourselves with the dispositions in which Jesus, Mary, the angels or the saints did the particular action in question. This will make our intercession still more efficacious and

still more meritorious. We may also, if we please, wish the action could be multiplied a thousand times, so that God should have more and more accidental glory thereby. Oh, it is astonishing how the conversion of sinners will come in upon us, how quickly scandal will be abated, how the dews of grace will become heavy rains, and fructify in the Church, if we devote ourselves to this practice! And we shall not be, as in past years we have so often been, like Gedeon's fleece, dry, almost miraculously dry, when all was wet around!

1. Take the Sacred Humanity of our dearest Lord. We may offer to God the perfections and powers of His Human Soul, the abysses of grace, science, and glory, which are in it; the love with which it loves God at this moment, and all the love with which it will ever love Him, to all eternity. We may ask for the conversion of a sin-stained soul, by the beauty and brightness of his Soul which at this hour is so lighting up the heavenly Jerusalem, that it needs "neither sun nor moon to lighten it, for the Lamb is the light thereof." We may ask health and strength for the preachers and missioners of our Lord by all the perfections of His glorified Body at this hour. Or leaving heaven, we may come down to earth, and offer to the Father all the unspeakable worship which our Lord's mystical life in the Blessed Sacrament is offering Him from a thousand thousand tabernacles; the poverty, the humiliation, the obedience to His priests, the zeal for souls, the refraining of His senses, the endurance of sacrileges, the patient love, the miraculous manifestations of that Hidden Life. Or, again, we may draw upon the past. There is the act of love in the moment of the Incarnation, the imprisonment for nine long months in Mary's

Blessed Womb, the virtues practised there, and the world governed from thence. There is the Nativity, and the mysteries of the first twelve years, Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, and Jerusalem, all they mean and contain of the unfathomable humiliations of the Incarnate Word, and of His inexpressible love for Mary and for men. There is the Hidden Life at Nazareth, the hiddenness of the Omnipresent, the obedience of the Omnipotent, the poverty of the All-rich, the fatigue of the Great Creator, the prayer of God, the love for Joseph, the sanctification of Mary, the merits and the satisfactions, and the complacency of angels, Mary, and of God in the wonders and virtues of those eighteen years. There is the Three Years' Ministry, the baptism by John, and the fasting in the wilderness, His way with His disciples, and His way with sinners, the contradictions He encountered, the sermons He preached, the miracles He wrought, the weariness he endured. Then we come to the shore of the illimitable sea of His most dear Passion, the seven journeys, the five trials, the seven words; and beyond that we have the Risen Life, the various apparitions, specially that first one to His Mother, the forty days of secret legislation for the matter and form of the sacraments and for the Church, all the beauty, charity, and hiddenness of those days, the words spoken, the wonders done, the graces given, the blessings imparted, and then the admirable pomp of His ascension. When will this fountain have run dry? When, if we never repeated the same thing twice over, shall we have exhausted these marvellous infinite acts, infinite not in themselves, but by their union with His Divine Person, and which have such unlimited power with God? All these are at our dis-

posal for intercession; and we may well believe they will have especial efficacy when suited to the sacred seasons of the year, all except the Passion, which has all seasons for its own.

2. Now, to speak of the intercessory use we may make of the Passion. We should naturally expect to find that as the work of our redemption was principally achieved through the mysteries of our Blessed Lord's Passion, He should desire those mysteries to be especially in our remembrance, and should allow them to prevail with His Sacred Heart over all others, when offered to Him in love, thanksgiving, or intercession. St. Bernard declares that the mere thought of our Lord's Passion is a spiritual communion. Father Balthazar Alvarez not only made it the ordinary subject of his meditations, but he used to say to his novices, "We must not think we have done any thing until we have reached this point, that we never in our hearts forget Christ crucified." F. Benedict, of Canfield, declares, that souls in the highest mystical union with God still retain meditation on the Passion; though F. Baker and others deny it in the sense of express meditation. Our Lord Himself said to St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, "If, every Friday, you will pay attention to the hour in which I expired upon the cross, you will at once receive particular graces from My spirit, which I then returned to the Eternal Father; and although you do not feel this grace, it shall always rest upon you." And the great bell of the Duomo still calls the faithful of Florence to this sacred remembrance. The Blessed Clare of Monte-Falco had the Passion so perpetually in her thoughts, that every thing she saw became instantly an ingenious

memorial of something connected with our Blessed Saviour's sufferings. Our Lord said to the Blessed Veronica, the Augustinianess, "I wish all men to do their best to sorrow in their hearts through veneration for My Passion, as if compassionating Me. If they shed one little tear over it, they may be sure they have done a great thing; for the tongue of man cannot tell what joy and satisfaction that one little tear causes Me." The angels revealed to the Blessed Joanna of the Cross, that the Divine Majesty took such complacency in sorrow for the Passion of Christ, and that such sorrow was so grateful a sacrifice, that it was reckoned equal to the shedding of our blood, or the endurance of great afflictions. St. Theodore Studita cautions us that though Easter is come, we must on no account let the memory of the Passion fade away, but keep the life-giving wounds, the cross, and sepulture always before our eyes. Orlandini tells us of a saying of Father Peter Faber, that as the Passion was Christ's road to glory, so compassion for the Passion is ours. Our Lord said to St. Gertrude, "Every one, even though he should feel himself weighed to the ground with great sins, may breathe freely with the hope of pardon, if he will only offer to God the Father My most innocent Passion and Death; let him be sure that by this he shall receive the saving fruit of indulgence; for there is no remedy on earth so efficacious against sin, as a devout recollection of My Passion, joined with true repentance and a right faith." The Blessed Albertus Magnus used to say that a single tear shed over our Lord's Passion, was better than a year's fast on bread and water, with watchings and disciplines St. Mary Magdalene revealed to a certain holy Domini-

can, that when she retired into the wilderness to do penance, after our Lord's ascension, she desired to know from Jesus how she was to occupy herself, and our Lord sent St. Michael to her with a most beautiful cross which he planted at the door of her cell, that she might spend her days in incessant meditation on the Passion. Once, when St. Gertrude was meditating on the Passion, she understood by a light from heaven that to ruminate on the sufferings of Christ is an exercise of infinitely greater efficacy than all others. Lastly, St. Augustine says,* "What kindles, urges, inflames and drives me to love Thee more than any thing else, and to make Thee lovely above every thing else, is the most ignominious and bitter death, which Thou, O good Jesus, didst endure for the work of our redemption. This alone, this altogether, easily claims for itself all our life, all our labour, all our devotion, and, finally, all our love. This, I say, best excites, most sweetly seeks, most amply multiplies our devotion."

With what sweet artifices of love our Lord can repay this devotion is most beautifully shown in the life of St. Gertrude. One Friday, when it was now near evening, she cast her eyes upon a crucifix, and, moved with compunction, she cried out, "Ah, my sweetest Creator and Lover! what and how great things didst Thou bear for my salvation to-day! and I, oh so unfaithful! have made no account of them, and the day has gone by while I have been occupied with other things. Alas! I have not devoutly called to mind hour after hour that Thou, dear Life that giveth life to all, for the love of my love, hast died!" The Lord from the crucifix answered her: "What you

* Conf. ii. 16.

neglected I have supplied for you; for every hour I gathered into My heart what you ought to have collected in yours; and this has made My heart swell with such an excessive fulness, that I have waited for this hour with great desire that this intention might be made to Me on your part. And now with this intention which you have just made, I will offer to God My Father all that I through the day have supplied for you, because without your own intention, it could not be so salutary for you!" "In this we may remark," says St. Gertrude, "the most faithful love of Jesus for man, which, solely on account of that intention by which He grieves over what he has neglected, amends it all with God the Father, and supplies for all deficiency in such a most lofty way." Once also, when the saint was handling a crucifix very devoutly, she understood by a supernatural light, that when any one looked with devotion on a crucifix, he was looked upon by God with such benignant mercy, that his soul, like a shining mirror, received into itself from divine love such an exceedingly delectable image, that all the heavenly hosts are delighted with it; and for as often as he shall have done this on earth, he shall have these images for so many increases of eternal glory in heaven.

Neither is this a mere devotion of feeling. "Ah!" said St. Gertrude once, "Ah! my only hope, and the salvation of my soul! tell me how I can do Thee at least a little good, then, for this Thy passion, to Thee so bitter, to me so salutary." And this was our Lord's answer: "When a man follows another's interests in preference to his own, he repays Me the captivity which I endured in the morning, when I was

taken, pinioned, and grievously tormented for men's salvation. When he humbly acknowledges himself to be in fault about any thing, he recompenses Me for the judgment which I underwent at the first hour, when I was accused by false witnesses, and sentenced to death. When he refrains his senses from things which delight him, he repays Me for the scourging which I endured at the third hour. When he obeys an ill-natured superior, he relieves the pain of My crown of thorns. When he is the injured party, but asks pardon first, he compensates for My carrying of the cross. When he almost goes beyond what he can do in extending charity to others, he repays Me for that extension which I so sharply endured when distended on the cross at the sixth hour. When, to hinder a sin, he does not mind sorrow or reproach, he pays Me for My death, which I suffered for the salvation of the world at the ninth hour. When he is reproached, and answers humbly, he, as it were, takes Me down from the cross. When he prefers his neighbour to himself, and thinks him more worthy of honour, or any other good thing, than himself, he pays Me for My burial."

On another occasion a similar revelation was made to the same saint. She said to our Lord, "Ah! Lord, tell me how I can laudably venerate Thy Passion." He replied: "By more frequently revolving in your mind that anxiety by which I, your Creator and Lord, when in My agony, prayed the more intensely, and through the excessive vehemence of My solicitude, desire, and love, I moistened the ground with My Bloody Sweat. Then you must commend to Me all you do, and all that has to be done about you, in union with that subjection wherewith I, for the same reason, said to the

Father, 'Not my will, but Thine, be done.' So you must receive all prosperous or adverse things with the same love with which I send them all to you for your salvation. You must receive prosperous things with gratitude, in union with that love by which I am your lover, and condescending to your frailty, I procure them for you, that by them you may learn to hope for eternal prosperity. You must receive adverse things in union with that love with which, out of the affection of My paternal fidelity, I send them to you, that by them you may earn for yourself an everlasting good."

Our Lord said to St. Bridget, "I counsel you to have always two thoughts in your heart; first, the remembrance of what I have done for you in suffering and dying; this thought will excite love of God; secondly, the consideration of My justice, and the future judgment; this will strike fear into your soul." When He speaks to her of the praises of good Christians, He counts, as one, that the whole of their thoughts go to His Passion. This, too, was the great devotion of our Blessed Lady, as she herself revealed to St. Bridget: "My thoughts and my heart were always in the sepulchre of my Son;" and again, she bade the saint always to be considering His Passion. So successfully did St. Bridget train her daughter Catherine in this devotion, that we read in Catherine's Life that every night, before going to bed, she spent four continuous hours making genuflections, and beating her breast, with many tears, because of the remembrance of Christ's Passion, and that all the while she offered herself as a holocaust to God. When the Blessed Angela of Foligno asked God what she could do to please Him more, He

vouchsafed to appear to her several times, both sleeping and waking, always as crucified on the cross, and He told her to look at His wounds, and then showed her, in a marvellous manner, how He had endured all those things for her; and lastly, He said, "What then can you do for Me which would be enough?" Another time, as the Bollandists relate, He appeared to her, and said, "Whosoever wishes to find grace, let him never take his eyes from the cross, whether My providence be visiting him with sorrow, or with joy."

No wonder, then, that the same Angela should have heard from our Lord that these were the benedictions which He would multiply upon those who were devoted to His Passion, and upon those who imitate it, and upon those who compassionate it. "Blessed are you of My Father, who compassionate Me, and who are sorrowing with Me, and who, walking My road, have merited to wash your stoles in My Blood. Blessed are you who compassionate Me crucified for you, and afflicted with immense griefs, that I might satisfy for you, and redeem you from immense and eternal pains; for compassionating Me in My poverty, sorrow, and contempt borne for yourselves, you have been found worthy. Blessed are you who shall be mindfully and devoutly compassionate toward My Passion, which is the miracle of all ages, the salvation and life of the lost, and the sole refuge of sinners; for you shall be truly partakers with Me of the kingdom, and glory, and resurrection which I have acquired by it, and co-heirs with Me for ever and ever. Blessed are you of My Father, and of the Holy Ghost, and truly blessed with the benediction which I shall give in the last judgment, because, when I came unto My own,

you have not repulsed Me, as My persecutors did; but, by your compassion, have received Me, a desolate stranger, into the home and hospitality of your heart. You have compassionated Me, stretched naked on the cross, hungering, thirsting, weak, nailed, and dying. You have willed to be My companions, and in this you have truly fulfilled the works of mercy. Therefore shall you hear in that terrible hour, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom which was prepared for you before the foundation of the world.' For I was hungry on the cross, and, at least by compassion, you gave Me to eat. Oh, happy you, truly happy, and blessed altogether! for if upon the cross I prayed to My Father with tears and weeping for My crucifiers and torturers, and excused them, saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' what shall I say for you who have compassionated Me, and been My devout partners, when, not upon the cross, but all blissful in My glory, I shall judge the world?"

Now, what do all these examples and revelations show, except that our Lord has been pleased to give us over His Passion as if it were really more utterly and completely our own, to do with it what we willed, than the pains we ourselves suffer, or the afflictions we have to bear? But to come to the use of the Passion in intercession, which is our immediate subject. Lancisius tells us,* "That the offering of the blood of Christ, or of His Passion and death, to the Eternal Father, or to Christ Himself, in order to appease Him for the sins of the world, is of boundless efficacy." This practice was taught by God to St. Mary Magda-

* ii. 18.

lene of Pazzi, when He vouchsafed to complain to her that there were so few in the world who made any effort to appease His anger against sinners. In consequence of this, many times in the day she offered up the blood of Christ for sinners of all classes, and her ordinary practice was daily to offer it fifty times for the living and the dead. She did this with so much fervour, that God repeatedly showed her multitudes of souls whose conversion she had thus obtained, as well as multitudes released from purgatory. Once in a rapture she cried out, "As often as the creature offers this Blood, by which it is redeemed, it offers a gift which has no price, that it can be paid back. Nay, the gift is so great, that the Eternal Father reckons Himself under obligation to His creature; for He sees it in its misery, which His infinite goodness desires to compassionate, and compassionating to communicate Himself to it; and thus this offering is the cause of His communicating now, and for ever continuing to communicate, His goodness to His creature."

"This devotion," says Lancisius, "glorifies and recreates God with the most excellent and noble of all offerings. It asks, or rather in a certain sense exacts, for our past sins remission, preservation from sin in time to come, the conversion of sinners and heretics, and freedom from the temporal pains due to sin. It avails, also, as a thanksgiving for all public and personal blessings, for the impetration of the Divine assistance, and for the relief of the numberless necessities both of the living and the dead."

3. Persons often wish to know how much devotion they ought to have to our Blessed Lady, and where their love ought to stop. They are dissatisfied if they

are told that they can never have enough devotion to her, that so far as degree is concerned there is no possibility of excess, and that there is no limit at which their love need stop. True as this is, it does not content them. They think it a sort of pious exaggeration, which is true in a sense, but no real answer to their question, or solution to their difficulty. But they could hardly object, if it was said to them, You are to love Mary as much as Jesus loved her, and you are to have as great a devotion to her as Jesus wishes you to have, and you can have no scruple in praying to Jesus for this devotion according to His will. It is impossible to know Jesus, much more to love Him, if we have not a warm devotion to His ever-blessed Mother. Neither can we conceive of any devotion to her more sure to move the Heart of Jesus to listen to our intercessions, than the offering to Him those graces which He Himself bestowed upon her, those acts of love by which the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity adorned her as their choice trophy of compassion, and those mysteries in which she corresponded to these graces, and merited so unspeakably. She is so mixed up with the glory of God, that every act of homage to her is a plain act of love of God. She is herself so completely the choice interest of Jesus, that He has none on earth to compare with the defence and propagation of her honour! For, if His Sacred Heart be mercifully bent upon the salvation of souls, He has chosen Mary as the refuge of sinners and the advocate of souls. If all God's works praise Him, and if when He looked upon the earth that He had made He was moved to bless it and to pronounce it very good, while the morning stars sang together, and the angels

shouted for joy, how much more do his own works and gifts in Mary praise him everlastingly, while she furnishes an unending theme for the songs of angels and of men! Oh, for the sake of Jesus we must learn to increase in our love of Mary. It must be a devotion growing in us like a grace, strengthening like a habit of virtue, and waxing more and more fervent and tender until the hour when she shall come to help us to die well, and to pass safely through the risk of doom.

Do we think sufficiently of this,—that devotion to our Blessed Lady is not a thing which, like the possession of a book or a rosary, we have once for all, final and complete? It would be no less untrue to say that when we have received from God the grace of humility, we have simply to hold fast what we have got, and never dream of getting more, than to say that devotion to Mary was an ungrowing thing. I repeat, it must grow like a virtue, and strengthen like a habit, or it is worth nothing at all. Nay, it is worse than worth nothing, as a little thought will show you. Love of Mary is but another form, and a divinely appointed one, of love of Jesus: and, therefore, if love of Him must grow, so also must love of her. If a person were to say, You must not mingle prayer to Mary with prayer to Jesus, he would show that he had no true idea of this devotion, and that he was already on the brink of a very dangerous error. Yet people sometimes thoughtlessly speak as if devotion to the Mother was a little trifle allowably cut off from devotion to the Son, that it was something surrendered by Jesus to Mary; that Jesus was one thing, and Mary was another, and that devotion to the two was to be divided

between them proportionably to their respective dignities, say a pound to Him, and an ounce to her. If such persons really saw what they mean, which they do not, they would perceive that they were talking impiety. Love of Mary is an intrinsic part of love of Jesus, and to imagine that the interests of the two can be opposed, is to show that we do not understand Jesus, or the devotion due to Him. If devotion to Mary is not already, and in itself, devotion to Jesus, then when we show devotion to her we are consciously subtracting something from Him, and so actually robbing God, which is sacrilege. So that when people tell us to keep within bounds, to moderate our devotion, and not to go too far, or to do too much for Mary, they are not, as they fancy, securing to Jesus His rightful honour, but they are making the horrible confession that they themselves do take something from Jesus to give to Mary, though they are careful it should not be very much. How dreadful this sounds, when put in plain words! Devotion to Mary, can get wrong *in kind;* it can never err *in degree.* If love of Mary be not love of Jesus, if devotion to Mary be not one of His own appointed devotions to Himself, aye, and the chief one too, then my theology as well as my love tells me I can have no room for Mary at all, for my heart cannot adequately hold Jesus as it is. Dearest Mother! how little I should know of you, if I could think of you so dishonourably! And what a poor, low notion should I have of God Himself! I might as well think grace kept me from God, or sacraments enabled me to do without Jesus, as imagine that you did aught else but gloriously magnify His love of me, and wonderfully intensify my love of Him!

Now see what materials the life of our Blessed Lady presents to us, that we may offer them again to God! Is there any disclosure of His love to a simple creature, or to all creatures together, equal to the grace of her Immaculate Conception, or of her election to the Divine Maternity? Whether we go through her life by the sixty-three mysteries of which it is composed, or sum it up in what theologians call her three sanctifications, at her Immaculate Conception, the moment of the Incarnation, and the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, it furnishes us with innumerable motives most dear and persuasive to the Heart of Jesus. Every act is full of His grace and of Her heroic love; every one is more pleasing to Him than all the heroism of His saints; and out of every one of them, because of the supreme love that was in her soul, God gains more glory than out of all the services of the three hierarchies of heaven.

The two devotions, to her Dolours and her Joys, might furnish illustrations of this. Passing over the devotion to her dolours as better known, and hoping to treat of it in another work, I will speak only of the devotion to her joys, which may be called the Franciscan devotion. It was the practice of our own St. Thomas of Canterbury, to say the Ave Maria three times in the day, in honour of our Lady's seven earthly joys, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Epiphany, the Finding in the Temple, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. One day our Blessed Mother appeared to him, and said, "Thomas, your devotion is most acceptable to me; but why do you only call to mind the joys which I had on earth? Henceforth remember those also which I now enjoy in heaven; for

every one who honours both these I will console, exhilarate, and present to my most dear Son at the hour of death." St. Thomas felt his heart filled with a marvellous exultation, and he cried out, "And how, my sweetest lady, can I do this, when I do not so much as know what these joys are?" Our Blessed Lady then told him, "that he was to honour with seven Hail Maries the following joys: her joy first, because the Most Holy Trinity honours her above all creatures, secondly, because her virginity has set her above all angels and saints, thirdly, because the great light of her glory illuminates the heavens, fourthly, because all the blessed worship her as the Mother of God, fifthly, because her Son grants her whatever she asks, sixthly, because of the grace given her on earth and the glory prepared for her clients in heaven, and lastly, because her accidental glory goes on increasing to the day of doom." St. Thomas is said to have composed a sequence, "Gaude flore virginali," on these joys, which was sung in some churches, and which is quoted in the Parnassus Marianus.* In the life of St. Catherine of Bologna, we read that she had a great devotion to St. Thomas, and used to practise this devotion. Br. Francis of the Cross relates also of the Blessed Ranulph, that while he was commemorating our Lady's seven earthly joys, she appeared to him, and revealed to him her heavenly joys, the same, but in different order, as those revealed to St. Thomas.

There is another revelation, to the Blessed Joseph Herman, the Premonstratensian, which shows how dear to our Blessed Lady is this devotion to her joys. There

* P. 207, ap. Lancis. ii. 51.

were at that time constant instances of sacrilegious plunder of churches, and it often fell to the lot of the Blessed Joseph to act as sentinel in the church. This caused him occasionally to intermit one of his usual devotions, which consisted in reciting certain Hail Maries in honour of Mary's joys. She appeared to him, and not as usual, in youth and beauty, but old and wrinkled. He ventured to inquire the reason of the change, and she replied, "I am become old to you; where is now the representation of my joys? Where those Hail Maries? Where those exercises of piety, by which I was made young to you and you to me? Do not intermit my service under the pretext of guarding the monastery, for I am its best guardian." Whereupon the Blessed Joseph returned to his usual exercises, much consoled at finding how much his Blessed Mother rejoiced in this devotion to her joys. St. Peter Damian also, in his Epistles,* mentions a similar incident. There was a certain monk who every day as he passed in front of our Lady's altar, used to salute her with the following antiphon, "Rejoice, O Mother of God, immaculate Virgin, rejoice with the joy thou receivedst from the angel; rejoice thou who didst bring forth the brightness of eternal light; rejoice, O Mother, rejoice Virgin Mother of God, rejoice thou the sole Virgin Mother; all creation praises thee; Mother of Light, intercede for us." One day as he was crossing the church, he heard a voice from the altar, saying, "Thou announcest joy to me, and joy shall happen to thyself."

But it is not only to our Blessed Lord that we may

---

* Lib. 3. Ep. 10.

offer the sorrows, and the joys, the gifts, graces, and greatness of His Mother, but to herself also. One day, when St. Gertrude was invoking her with those words of the Church in the Salve Regina, "Ah! then, our advocate," she saw our dear Mother, as if drawn by ropes, incline toward her. By this she understood that as often as any one names Mary his advocate with devotion, her motherly tenderness is so much moved by the name, that she is as it were unable to prevent herself from granting his prayers. At these words, "Those thine eyes of mercy," our Lady gently touched her Son, and turned Him toward the earth, saying to St. Gertrude, "These (meaning the eyes of Jesus) are those most merciful eyes of mine, which I can incline to the salvation of all who invoke me, from which they receive the most rich fruit of eternal salvation." Hence she learned from our Lord at least once a day to invoke that most kind Mother with these words: "Eja ergo, Advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte;" and she was assured by Him, that she would thus secure for herself no little consolation in the hour of death.*

St. Bernard tells us to offer all our offerings to God through the hands of Mary; and though the passage is so well known, I must not omit it here.† "Whatever you are going to offer, remember to commend it to Mary, that grace may return to the Giver of grace through the same channel whereby it flowed into you. Not that God was unable to infuse grace as He willed, without this aqueduct, but He chose to provide a channel for you. For your hands, perhaps, are filled with

* Rev. lib. iv.

† De Aquæductu.

blood, or soiled with gifts, which you have not altogether shaken off from them: therefore that little which you are going to offer, take care, if you do not wish to be repulsed, to give it to Mary to offer with those most worthy and acceptable hands of hers. For those hands are as whitest lilies, and the lover of lilies will never reprove as not found among the lilies what is found in Mary's hands." And Lancisius says we should do this for two reasons: first, because as God has willed that we should receive His gifts through Mary, so we should offer our gifts to Him through Her; and secondly, because oblation through her implies the great esteem which God has for her, which is at once the essence of her interior veneration, and the origin of her public honour.

4. Thus the beautiful life of the angels, God's eldest-born, may also furnish us with most ample materials for intercession: and our Lord seems to call our attention to it, when He bids us pray, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Scripture teaches us a great deal about the angels, their worship of God, their ministries toward other creatures, their individual characters, as in the case of Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, their multitude, and their nine choirs by name. Some theologians have taught that each angel is a species of himself, which would indeed open out quite an overwhelming view of the magnificence of God. Others, with more show of reason, make twenty-seven species, three in each choir, as there are three choirs in each hierarchy; and even this gives us amazing ideas of the court of heaven, when we remember how hard it is for us to conceive of any further specific division of reasonable creatures than into those with

bodies, and those purely spiritual. Others, without entering into the question of species, tell us that the grace of each angel is something quite different in beauty and excellence from the grace of his fellows; and if we follow out this thought also, it will be a joy to us to think of all the perfection of sweet worship which God is receiving in Heaven while we are serving Him so meanly upon earth. Thus, Sister Minima of Gesu Nazzareno, a Carmelite nun of Vetralla, who lived at the time of the French invasion of Italy, and spent a life of incessant and wonderful intercession, used continually to offer to the Divine Majesty the love of the first choir of Seraphim, in reparation for all the outrages then going on in the world. So also we are supplied with fresh materials for intercession by the various magnificence of worship which the different orders of saints are at this hour, and every hour, offering to God in heaven, a worship and a glory which is increasing constantly as fresh souls from earth or purgatory attain to bliss. And in all this we satisfy our love, while we are with gentle efficacy influencing the Sacred Heart to grant our prayers.

5. Then, again, if we descend to earth, even there we find sweet bundles of fragrant incense wherewith to appease the just anger of God, and to win a loving answer to our prayers. All that the saints have ever done in past centuries, the wonders of Joseph's hidden sanctity, the solitary austerities of the Baptist, every weary step the apostles took along the Roman roads, every pang the martyrs suffered; or farther back into the Old Testament times, the raptures of the prophets, the fidelity of the Machabees, the marvels of David's godlike heart, the fights of Josue, the meekness of

Moses, the purity of Joseph, the simplicity of Jacob, the meditations of Isaac, the faith of Abraham, the priesthood of Melchisedeck, the building of Noe, the blood of Abel, and the long nights and toilsome days of Adam's nine hundred years of diligent, heroic, and accepted penance; all these we may offer humbly and confidently, as if the sweetness and freshness of yesterday were upon them. Neither can we have a method of prayer more in harmony with the mind of the Church; for it is almost the commonest form of her collects to ask God for mercies now, because of past mercies which He has vouchsafed to His saints and people. But there is the present, as well as the past. Earth brings forth its glad harvest for God's glory at every hour. Out upon its hills, and plains, and valleys this day, in the convents and in the world, from the Pope in his palace to the converted Indian in his hut, how many supernatural acts are rising up to God, how many acts of faith, breathings of hope, sighs of love and holy sorrow, how many penances, how much conformity in pain to His most blessed Will! How many masses are being said, how many communions made, absolutions given, Extreme Unctions received, and each hour how many dear though silent victories are the waters of baptism achieving for the glory of the ever-blessed Trinity! All these belong to us; all these may we gather at our will and put them on the live coals of our devotion in the thuribles of our hearts, and offer incense to the Most High. Nay, the inferior creatures are all praising God, by answering the end of their creation: the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, the woods and flowers, the winds and dews; and these, as they strike upon

our eye or ear, we can offer in grateful love to the Majesty of God. There are, too, God's own works, from the creation of the world to the present hour of His manifold Providence; His forbearance with sin, or His judgments on it; His voices, and visions, and revelations; His interpretations in behalf of His Church; His visible protection of His ark in old times, and of the Holy See in our own. By all these He is willing to be entreated. All these He gives us as weapons for the armoury of prayer. The inventive love of the saints and holy men has gone even further than this. They have offered to God in the fervour of their hearts all the homage that all possible creatures could offer to Him; that so they might come, or rather might seem to come, as near to His infinity as possible. They have dared to conceive of those three abysses, the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, and the love of the Holy Spirit, as pouring forth in order and beauty all possible worlds, and have offered up these countless systems as an act of love and a plea of intercession. They have offered up too the manifold and unknown sufferings of purgatory, which they one day expect themselves to feel, as beautiful in their perfections, holy in their dread functions, and further sanctified by contact with the Holy Souls, and so as a sweet oblation to the justice and purity of God.

6. But holy men have gone further even than this. "All things are Christ's, and Christ is God's." They have felt how unequal to the majesty of God are all the praises of creatures; and therefore, when they have desired to implore of God some more than common grace, they have offered to Him His own

infinite perfections, and the glory He receives from those attributes which are Himself. They have pleaded by the Eternal Generation of the Son, and by the Double Procession of the Holy Ghost. They have offered to God the knowledge and love whereby He knows and loves Himself, and the incommunicable complacency of the Three Divine Persons in Each Other. And they have found, not only an answer to their prayers, but an increase of divine love in their souls, which they would hardly have conceived to be possible. They have found the technical terms of dogmas and definitions to be, not mere words and sounds, but flames from very heaven.

It is difficult to keep to our subject, that of intercession, when we are quoting so many things which run away with us and cause us to speak of love. But let us review all these riches of our poverty, all these our possessions in Christ, and see if we have not indeed an abundance of sacrifices with which to approach God in continual and fervent intercessions. Through what fields and fields of delightful meditation do they not lead us all the while! What liberty of spirit they impart to us! How easy it is to make this a service of love, where all so breathes of love that it almost causes us to forget our intercession!

Take the case of invalids, of persons, not so much suffering from the pain of serious illness, as beneath the continual pressure of ailing health. They, too, desire to devote themselves to the glory of God, to the interests of Jesus, and to the saving of souls; yet they can do nothing, so far as external activity is concerned, neither perhaps have they the means to help good works with alms. Direct intercession, direct asking

of God in so many words for grace for such and such persons, is soon exhausted. There is nothing in it to beguile the weariness of infirm health, or to lead the spirit on. But to wander through these treasuries of holy offerings, countless, various and beautiful as they are, is a placid occupation of the spirit. It recreates the flagging devotion; and thus enables us to keep up and perpetuate our affectionate and reverential intercourse with God, while we are in reality doing great and solid work for His glory and the advancement of His Church. And not to invalids only, but to all, it is an easy, because interesting practice of the presence of God, interesting to the affections as well as to the mind. The more our ideas about God are multiplied, the more various our thoughts, and images, and recollections of things which have to do with Him, of course the more our minds and hearts are engrossed with Him, and so it becomes easier to live all day in His sensible presence. And is not the practice of the presence of God one half of Holiness? Neither should we omit to mention the unworldly temper which this method of intercession would produce in us. The world's strong point is its multiplicity. Its objects of interest are so numerous. It addresses so many sides of our nature. It lays hold of us in such a variety of ways. Whereas, religion is to many people so intellectually uninteresting, so dry and barren, so uniform and monotonous. They know so little about it; and they cannot always keep to one thing. And thus spirituality is at a disadvantage. It is true that there is a very lofty and sublime state of the soul in contemplation where the bare thought of God is its perfection. But these things are not for us. We, and such as we, need all the in-

terest which variety and beauty can give to devotion; and even then we tire of it before long. And thus the more interesting and various is our religious knowledge, the more easy do we find it to cast out of our souls the miserable spirit of the world, and to become engrossed with the interests of Jesus.

And what consolation too is there not in all these riches of our poverty, when low spirits are upon us, or an over-depressing sense of sin, or the thwartings of men, or the failure of good works, or the unsatisfactoriness of life and of the world? Downcast as we may be, after all, we want nothing so much as that God should be loved, and Jesus have His own. And so weary with work or foiled with disappointment, when the dark night is closing in, bringing with it to our sick spirits a sense of imprisonment, and when the dismal rain curtains us round, and we fret to be at liberty and at large, there is the very freedom of a sovereign to a soul traversing this boundless empire of God and Jesus, of Mary, angels, saints, men, and the blameless creatures, and rejoicing in that never-ceasing sacrifice of praise which is rising up from every nook and corner of creation to the dear Majesty of our most loving God and Father.



CHAPTER VI.

Minting Money.

GOD is the centre of every thing, and the value of every thing. As every thing comes from Him, so every thing returns to Him. Even the rebellious creature, which refuses to repose in the embraces of His love, falls into the hands of His justice Nothing is worth any thing, except in so far as God chooses to have to do with it. The enlightened mind or the loving heart can respect nothing, except under its relation, true or supposed, to Almighty God. There is but one view of things which is true, and that is God's view of them. It seems hardly worth while to say such very obvious things. Yet the misery is that even Catholics find a difficulty in getting these truths into their minds, to say nothing of the further difficulty of acting upon them when received. Many men are shocked at the external signs of oblivion of God, which are so distressingly obvious in an heretical country. And yet they themselves in their own subject-matter do not really let God

have his own. Look how Catholics act when mixed up with a political party, or a scientific institute, or aristocratical society, and you will see at once conduct which, implicitly at least, supposes that God is very well in His own place, but that he has limits, and that to intrude Him, and religious considerations which have to do with Him, into certain discussions, actions, or interests, is either an impertinence or a narrow-mindedness, or at least a tolerated idiosyncrasy. Many good people, from the best of motives, fall into this, and they deem they are going to win God some glory, and His Church some prosperity, from thus playing the civil to the world and its principles. Alas! they wake up one day and find that, while their own devotion has become dull, and their prayers distracted, and their piety merely exterior, and their principles insensibly lowered to the level around them, they have not drawn to God one single soul, or in any one nook of the world increased the love of our dear Lord. With how many is this the case, who are thought to be invaluable men and pillars of the Church, not because they are supernatural men and in God's secrets, but because they have the world's ear, and represent its influential classes! And their prudence is successful! But in what does it succeed? Does anybody love Jesus better? Is there a poor soul saved somewhere? Oh no! but the Ministry of the day have been got to drop a condescending word about the Pope, or a neutral member has asked a question about some little something in the House of Commons; which is first asked, then noticed in the next day's paper, and finally ends in nothing! But, then, any thing like unrespectability has been so completely avoided! Well, well! God be praised, and these kind

patrons of God be praised as well. Only sometimes we want something more than to be respectable. Let us look to our prudence. It will be the best thing about us, if it be supernatural. But not else. In this country, and at this time, men must have a very clear view of God, else they are quite sure in a hundred ways not to let Him have His own.

It is very obvious to say that if we always knew what God wished, it would be a great help to us in serving Him. We should not surely throw ourselves into open rebellion against the express will of God. Yet practically, in by far the greatest number of our actions, we do know this; and in all of them, if we do not know what He would have us do, we know at least the motive from which He would have us act, whenever we act at all. "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God." St. John tells us that God is charity. Thus in the whole of the almost infinite and complicated system in which we live, God has contrived all things, quite wonderfully, for these two ends, if they might not more properly be called one end than two; He has arranged every thing, first, so that He may be loved; and secondly, so as to enable us to love Him. If we may dare thus to speak of the Almighty, He seems to have no other end in view at all: and He manages things by artifices of almighty power in order to bring this about. This is His rule by which he has done every thing. The hearts of His creatures are the only treasures He will condescend to accept from His own creation.

It is remarkable, when we come to think of it, that neither angels nor men were created in a state of

nature, but in a state of grace; and were thus able at once to love God, and to merit eternal life, which is nothing else than eternal society with Him. Grace was a better position than nature for loving God. By grace He could communicate Himself to us. By it He at once got more love from us, and made us more able to love Him. Then came redemption, and the same end is visible there. He could have forgiven sin without the Incarnation; but it was the most loving way, and more sweetly constrained us to love Him. When our dear Lord came, one tear was enough to redeem countless worlds; but blood was more loving. Then one drop of blood was enough, but to shed it all, and to shed it variously, in the garden, at the pillar, during the way of the cross, and on Calvary, was more loving, more likely to call out men's love. When Jesus went, and the work of redemption was to go on operating through all ages, common grace would have done; but that Jesus should come back to us invisibly in the transcending wonder of the Blessed Sacrament was more loving, more personal, and more constraining to our affections. We might be eternally happy in a sinless immortality, spent in a world of beautified nature; but His delight is to be with the children of men, and that they should be with Him to all eternity, and that nothing short of His own dear and adorable Self should be their enjoyment. You see every thing our Heavenly Father does is for love. He vouchsafes to long for our love. He makes us so that we can only be happy in loving Him; and then, looking compassionately on our intense desire to love Him more, He does all that we will let Him do to enable us to love Him more and more worthily and fervently. Thus all

is love from first to last: there is no other measure; there is no other principle.

Oh, that we had the hearts to take this in, and all that it involves! If we are to come to weights and measures with Infinite Goodness, surely His love of us should be our measure of love of Him, a measure to which we must never cease to aspire, though we shall never attain it. If our hearts are not at once touched, melted, and carried away by the very thought and name of God, reflection must at least convince us that all religion is a matter of love, and that without some love we can never see God. All through, God takes the lower place in His own world; He stoops to plead when we should expect Him to command: He makes as though we were laying Him under an obligation who created us out of nothing, and from whom alone all that is good proceeds. May I say it? He makes love to us, and woos our souls with blandishments which no churlishness of ours seems ever to repel. He is continually giving way, continually waiving His rights, putting Himself in our position and us in His. The Incarnation is itself a figure of the whole conduct of the Creator to His unworthy creatures. The mystery of the Blessed Sacrament is simply in harmony with the way and conduct of the Almighty in His own world. And, alas! we are not touched! We are as hard, dry, ungracious, mean, as ever! As though it were some great honour to us to show off the might of our free will, and that while God was contriving every thing to get love from us, we could manage, in spite of Him, to make religion as nearly as possible a shopkeeper's bargain, or a convict's grudging obedience. Oh, till we got to know our own hearts, hell might

have seemed a severity; but truly a little self-knowledge shows that it is almost the chiefest, because the most indispensable, of the Divine Mercies.

Well might St. Francis run about the woods in the valley of Spoleto, exclaiming, "Oh, God not known and not loved!" Well might St. Bruno cause the mountain solitudes to echo with his one life-long cry, "Oh, Goodness! Goodness! Goodness!" Well might our dearest Lord appear to St. Gertrude, pale, weary, bleeding and dirt-stained, and say, "Open your heart, my daughter, for I want to go in and lie down; I am weary of these days of sin!"

But at last, as we grow in the knowledge of God, we grow in His love also. We come at length to feel pain and anguish because we do not love our Blessed God more, and because others do not love Him also. Here too He is ready to meet us. He not only arranges all things so as to get love, but with this He arranges so as to enable us to love Him in all manner of supernatural ways. I said in the last chapter that He did this in two ways more especially; first, He gives us all that is His, and lets us offer it to Him again as if it were all our own; these are the riches of our poverty which we then considered. Secondly, He magnifies our own poor actions and gives them an immense value by uniting them to His, and enabling us to do them from supernatural motives, and in union with Him. It is this last method of putting it in our power to love Him more worthily that we are to consider now. We are to meditate on the treasure of our common actions, and on the Catholic devotion of perpetually offering them up to God united with the actions of Jesus. This is the second manner in which God mercifully

rescues us from the littleness and worthlessness of our own selves. There is not a single thing we do all the day long, which may not, and that quite easily, be made to advance the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the Salvation of souls. No matter how completely the world may have set its seal upon it, nor how utterly it seems to be an affair of temporal business, or a trivial concern belonging only to the misery of human life. The heavenly motive enters into it; that moment it is all filled with God, and becomes a jewel of almost infinite price, with which the Divine Majesty condescends to be well pleased. The hours pass, one following the other; each one is filled with actions belonging to our state. We write, or read; or keep accounts, or buy, or sell, or speak, or think, or suffer; and all the while, if we choose it, we are minting money, heavenly money which can merit eternal life. There needs but the act or intention of oblation, by which our actions touch those of God made Man, to confer this value upon every single thing we do.

This devotion of saying mass, as it were, with our actions all day long is peculiarly Catholic. I suppose it strikes converts as much as any thing else in the devotional system of the Church; and it is surely another most touching instance of the way in which God contrives every thing for love. Pious people sometimes complain of the distractions of worldly occupations; they think it will be the peculiar business of heaven to worship God with an unintermitting worship; in fact, they complain that earth is not heaven. Yet surely, in this respect at least, it need not be so very unlike it. If ours is a service of love, every one of these so-called distractions is in truth a precious

oblation. Every action is Host and Incense and Song and Sacrifice all the day long, if we choose that it should be so ourselves. Now, if we have really at heart God's glory, the interests of Jesus, and the saving of souls, if we would fain be occupied in these things at all hours, we must not neglect to profit by this treasure of our common actions.

The spirit of oblation, I have said, is essentially Catholic. It springs from the doctrine of the Mass, which is the centre and fountain of all true devotion. It belongs to a religion of sacrifice, such as the Gospel is in every way. Our dear Lord redeemed us by the oblation and sacrifice of Himself; and hence oblation and sacrifice enter into every minutest detail of our religion. No wonder then that they should give a shape and form, a genius and spirit, to Catholic devotion. This is so obvious, it need not be dwelt upon. But what I want you to observe is that here also is the same contrivance for love, the same sweet paternal spirit, which God vouchsafes to show us everywhere. It would seem as if prayer was a privilege which could not possibly be exceeded even by infinite compassion, and that a creature could look for nothing more than the privilege of making his wants known to his merciful Creator. Yet oblation is something beyond prayer. In prayer we receive from God; in oblation it is He who vouchsafes to receive, and we are allowed to give. To make presents is not only a sign of love, but of some sort of equality: and thus from oblation there springs a more familiar, tender, and affectionate familiarity with God than could arise from petition only. The childlike freedom of the saints comes in great measure from this spirit of oblation.

1. Let us now see what the practices of the saints have been with regard to the oblation of their own daily actions to God. We must remember throughout that our position is this. We are longing for God's glory, for the interests of Jesus, and for the good of souls. We see an overwhelming amount of work to be done, little time to do it in, and small means to do it with. We must be covetous of all we have, greedy of grace, and greedy of every thing which grace can make its own. Our dear Lord! it is for Him we are working, so we must work hard, and always. We have something to do, and we do it, and there the action stops. But if we do the same thing with devout attention, offering it to Jesus in union with something similar which He condescended to do on earth, it becomes a sweet sacrifice of immense power with God. What miser but would be minting money all the day if he could? Yet this is just what we can do, and, through the stupendous mystery of the Incarnation, in a most real way, and effectual to the obtaining of eternal life.

St. Thomas teaches that the work of a just man becomes the more meritorious in proportion to the excellence of the supernatural motive for which the work is done, and that as love, the love of benevolence, as it is called, is more excellent than any other, so works done for that motive are the most meritorious of all. Furthermore he teaches, as I mentioned in a previous chapter, that works done to God as our Father, are more meritorious than those done for Him as our Creator, because the motive is more excellent. Rodriguez tells us that God revealed to St. Mechtildis that it was most pleasing to Him that we should offer

Him all our actions in union with those of Christ, and our Lord Himself taught the same to St. Gertrude, and also to St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi. Thus St. Thomas says* that "Christ is signified by the double altar of holocausts and incense; because by Him we ought to offer to God all the works of virtue by which we afflict our flesh; and these are offered on the altar of holocausts; and that we should offer to Him also all those which we do with a greater perfection of mind, by the spiritual desires of the perfect; and these are offered on the altar of incense." Thus, St. Ignatius in his rule says, "that all his children are to have a right intention, not only as to their state of life, but as to all details, always in all of them seeking to act only so as to please the Divine Goodness for His own sake;" and St. Theresa says, "That every one will gain the desired end of his prayers more efficaciously, if he will but offer his actions to the Eternal Father in union with the merits of our Lord." And Orlandini tells us of Father Peter Faber, "That he took upon himself the patronage of the dead so thoroughly that he wished all his brothers so to offer their ordinary actions that when hindered by so many cares, and distracted by so many external occupations, they could not pray with their voices, their very actions might rise up as silent petitions for the Holy Souls." In order to avoid weariness and the straining of the mind, Lancisius recommends that this offering should be made by single words, either, "I will, or I offer, or I do or say this,—for Thy sake, my heavenly Father!" and that we may either keep to the same words or vary them, according

* i. 2. q. 102.

as we find our devotion is most excited. This prayer of practical oblation is, he says, in itself more excellent and meritorious even than the contemplation of the prayer of quiet; and for this reason. In both, whether oblation or contemplation, the formal object is the same, God loved simply for His own sake, but in oblation a further matter is added, the work or word done or said for God. Hence it is that theologians teach that the mixed life is more perfect than that which is purely contemplative.*

The same spiritual writer recommends also that we should offer to God the particular circumstances of our actions, as well as the actions themselves. For example, on rising in the morning, he would have us say, "O most holy and beloved Father, I now desire to rise because of Thee, and in union with the merits, and all the works of my dear Lord, without delay, so as promptly to obey the call of holy obedience, and to dress myself with all modesty, and as quickly as I can, that I may begin all the sooner to work for thy glory." And he says that this variation of the material circumstances of our actions at once increases the merit of the offering, and prevents weariness and oppression of spirit. Yet this might act differently on different persons, or on the same persons at different times.

He recommends also, as an act of greater love and merit, that we should make the offering of our actions for several supernatural ends, subordinate to the great one of God alone; and he gives the following examples,

---

* The Benedictine and Carmelite schools of mystical theology would hardly allow this Jesuit doctrine. But the *merit* of contemplation is a very vexed question.

not that we should necessarily think of them all in all our actions, but in order to furnish variety for different tastes and devotional inclinations. 1. For the supernatural goodness which there is in the act of virtue itself. 2. To fulfil the precepts of God or the Church. 3. To obey our superiors. 4. To overcome and mortify self. 5. To satisfy for the sins of such and such a person: for, in order to satisfy for our own sins, it is not necessary to make a distinct oblation of our actions. For, every supernatural work of a just man satisfies for his sins of itself, if it be not offered for others. 6. That by this work we may worship, glorify, and please God in the highest degree. 7. That we may show Him our gratitude for all His gifts to us and to others, to the Sacred Humanity of our Blessed Lord, to our dear Lady, the angels, the saints, and even the unhappy ones who are lost. 8. That we may give good example and edification. 9. That by this action or word we may increase the habits of virtue which make us dear to God. 10. That we may become more like God. 11. That we may thus adorn our soul, and make it a more fitting temple for the Holy Ghost, and a more chaste member of Jesus Christ. 12. That we may so spread more widely the glory of Christ and the efficacy of His Precious Blood by thus multiplying supernatural actions in ourselves. 13. That we may gladden the Church Triumphant. 14. And adorn the Church Militant. 15. And confound the evil spirits. 16. That we may call down more grace upon all the Body of Christ. 17. That we may thus before men, angels, and devils, exhibit the efficacy of the Blessed Eucharist. 18. That we may fulfil thereby our vows, or desires, or resolutions. 19. That we may be faithful to divine in-

spirations. 20. That we may imitate Christ and the Saints. 21. That we may thereby do honour to our dear Lady, our guardian angel, or our patron saint. And all these intentions will apply as well to the suffering of evil as to the doing of good.

Thus, in the secret laboratory of intention, is the dross of our commonest actions daily turned into the finest gold; and we may learn, to our great consolation, of what value these actions become in our Lord's sight, from His own revelation to St. Gertrude. As a covetous usurer, said He, would not willingly miss the opportunity of making a single penny, much more unwillingly would I allow one thought or one movement of your little finger made for My sake to perish, without My turning it to My own great praise and your eternal salvation. On another occasion, when she was suffering one night from weakness, she ate some grapes, with the mental intention of refreshing our Lord in herself. He on His part took this as a royal gift, and said to her, "In this I confess that you have recompensed Me for the bitter potion which I for your sake took upon the cross; for now I suck unspeakable sweetness out of your heart; for with how much greater purity of intention you recreate your body for My glory, with so much the more sweetness do I acknowledge myself recreated in your soul." Another time our Lord said to her, "My tenderness will accept one step, or one lifting of a straw from the ground, or one word, or one courteous gesture, or one Requiem æternam for the dead, or one word for sinners, or even for the just, if there be a pious intention along with it."

It is consoling, and perhaps, all things considered, not surprising, that the spiritual writings of the saints

were much more condescending towards our low attainments and faint hearts than the writings of good men who are not saints. How often is the poor, timid, yet aspiring spirit wearied and cruelly beaten back by the hard, dry, theoretical system of some spiritual books! How full they are of heights, so high that an angel scarce could breathe upon them! They are ever putting before us an almost impossible detachment from creatures, a continual stress and strain of mind, a complete death of all natural activity, or else they tell us we are not in the right way. I do not say already on the mountain tops, but not even on the road. Again, they throw us almost into despair, by showing us how delusion is everywhere, and wellnigh inevitable; so that we abandon the pursuit of perfection altogether, as a state where God entices us only to take us at a disadvantage. How different are the writings of the saints! Even St. John of the Cross, the "doctor of nothingness," as he has been named, how sweet, encouraging, mild, hopeful, and gradual he is to the lowest of us in his teaching! Of my St. Philip, it used to be said, laughingly, in his lifetime, that he drove men to heaven in a carriage and four. Wise St. Ignatius said, that if men in religious houses were not fed well, they could never pray well; and in the work *Of a Good Superior*, we may see how he was always teasing the Father Ministers to get better food, and of a more expensive quality. He drove one nearly wild by insisting that all the community should have lampreys one Friday when they were very dear, so that only cardinals and ambassadors were buying them. St. Francis of Sales complained to the Bishop of Belley of the bad dinners he gave him, yet he was the saint of pure love.

Would that pure spirit, St. Alphonso, have been half so lax, if he had been but half as holy? Spiritual books tell us that if we indulge, for instance, our sense of smell in some fragrance, it is a huge immortification; yet St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi runs into the garden, plucks a flower, inhales the fragrance with delight, and cries out, "O good, most good God! who from all eternity destined this flower to give me, a sinner, this enjoyment." So I know not how St. Gertrude and her grapes would have fared with some spiritual writers. She would have been told that she should remember our Lord's thirst upon the cross, and that she should not give way, unless, indeed, she felt that she had not grace for the heights of perfection. You see our sweet Jesus took quite another view. Thus, also, St. Theresa, in her letter to Alonzo Velasquez, bishop of Osma, speaking of herself in the third person, says, "Besides what I have just mentioned, then again, as far as regards her body and health, I think she takes more care of it, and is less mortified in eating; neither has she such desires of doing penance as she used to have. But, in her opinion, all tends to this object, namely, to be able to serve God the more in other things; for she often offers Him, as an agreeable sacrifice, this care she takes of the body."* I am not saying it is easy to be a saint, but that saints deal more easily with those who are trying to be saints than uncanonized writers do. The saints are the easiest masters. It is because they are more like Jesus than the rest of men. Whosoever is trying to attain Christian perfection, let him follow St. Philip's rule, and keep to the books of authors

* Dalton's Translation, vol. i. p. 16.

"whose names begin with an S"—that is, the saints. If he puts himself too completely into the hands of other authors, the chances are ten to one that others, far behind him now, will one day meet him walking down the hill in dismay of soul, angry and disheartened, because his authors have dragged him through the brambles, and broken his knees upon the rocks, and given many an occasional roll down slippery steeps, while others have been stealing on with modest stealth, picking their way from one saintly footprint to another, as little urchins walk along the sea-sands, putting their tiny feet into the footprints which a big man leaves behind him, and if the strides are a little long and somewhat ludicrous, at least the quicksands are avoided.

But I must guard against being misunderstood. I am not saying that uncanonized spiritual writers are dangerous guides, or that their works are not most valuable, and many of them received with the applause of the Universal Church. All I mean is that, *speaking generally*, there is a very perceptible difference between the tone of writers that are saints, and writers that are not saints, and that the difference is that the saints are more condescending, and speak more indulgently; and further, *still speaking generally*, those persons, and they are not few, who are men of one book, and trust themselves utterly to one book, are safest when that book is the work of a saint. I do not forget that Thomas à Kempis is not a saint, and that St. Francis of Sales was a man of one book, and his author, Scupoli, the Theatine, is uncanonized. You must not push my words beyond a caution and a general proposition. The fact is, spiritual books are a tremendous power, and can

harm as well as help, and, like steam, when they do harm, it is on a terrific scale.

But it was not simply because Gertrude was a saint that our Lord took such pleasure in this oblation of her ordinary actions. Once when the whole community were bowing at the words, Verbum caro factum est, out of reverence for our Lord's Incarnation, she understood our Lord to say, "Whenever any one with devout gratitude bows at these words, giving Me thanks because for the love of him I deigned to become Man, so often, impelled by the spur of My own tenderness, do I condescendingly bow to him in return; and with the most intimate affection of My Heart, I make a double offering to God the Father of all the fruit of My most Blessed Humanity, in augmentation of that man's eternal bliss." See, also, how He speaks of comforts: "Whosoever," said He, to St. Gertrude, "shall study to take all his recreations and use his comforts, in drinking, eating, sleeping, and the like, with this intention in his heart or mouth, Lord, I take this food, or whatever it may be, in union with that love wherewith Thou didst sanctify Thyself, when, in Thy most Sacred Humanity, Thou didst use like comforts, to the glory of the Father, and the salvation of the whole human race, that in union with Thy divine love it may increase the consolation of those in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory—he, each time he does so, is as it were a most firm shield in front of Me, against the many vexations with which worldly people persecute Me, and I look upon him as My protector and defender." Once, on the Thursday before the Carnival, after matins, Gertrude heard some servants in a neighbouring house making a noise in the kitchen, preparing their break-

fast. She sighed, and exclaimed, "Alas, my Lord! how early men rise in the morning to persecute Thee with their feasting!" But our Lord, smiling a little at her, replied, "Nay, dearest daughter! here is no need for sighing. They who are making the noise are not of the number who rage against Me with their gluttony; for by this breakfast they are incited to their daily toil. Wherefore I delight in their feeding, as a man rejoices when he sees his beast feed heartily, because it will serve him better."

O gentle Lord! why do not our hearts melt when we read these things of Thee? It is no taskmaster with whom we have to do! Such little toils and such great rewards! Such a profusion of mercies, and graces, and caresses! If the dog loves his master, and shows that he appreciates his kindness and attentions, how much more should we serve, and all for love, so dear a Master as our compassionate Lord? Yet, alas! we will persist in having such hard notions of our wonderful God. We will go on imitating the ungracious ways of the servant who hid his one talent in a napkin for fear of his Lord's austerity, and we will not own God for what He is, our almost incredibly indulgent Father. And how he feels this rude perversity! "Hear, O ye heavens! and give ear, O earth! I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood."* Yet while we will not show Him the gratitude of beasts, He still covenants to be to us more than a mother to her child. When

* Isaias i. 3.

Sion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me," He answered the cry, "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget Thee."†

What is more necessary to true worship than a deep and calm reverence? Nay, what is more sweet to hot-hearted love than to be hushed and awe-smitten in the presence of the refulgent attributes of God? Familiarity in religion would be a simple impertinence if reverence did not mingle with it. What more familiar than the relation between father and son, yet what love more reverent than filial love? Yet it was no true reverence which made Peter tell his Master to depart from him because he was a sinful man, or which made the craven men of Gadara beseech Jesus to withdraw His importunate blessings from their coast. But it was reverence which made Magdalene strive to hold the Risen Jesus by His feet, though it was not His will to suffer it. Too often, alas! we mistake coldness for reverence, and stiffness for respect. How sweetly did Jesus reprove that spirit when St. Gertrude complained to Him of one of her nuns who out of reverence, as she fancied, kept away from a community communion. "What would you have me do?" said our Blessed Lord, "these good people tie the bandage of their own unworthiness so tightly over their eyes that they cannot see the tenderness of My Paternal Heart."†

The spirit of St. Gertrude was so eminently a spirit of oblation and of familiarity, that when Lancisius wrote his treatise on the Presence of God, he devoted

* Isaias xlix. 14. † Rev. iii. x. sub. fine.

an entire chapter to the methods observed by her in the oblation of her ordinary actions. Eusebius Amort, in his examination of her revelations, notes the language of some of these methods as new in the Church, and not according to the language of the schools; though other grave authors quote them with approval. Omitting these, I will now mention some of her methods.* Sometimes she offered her actions in union with the mutual love of the Three Divine Persons of the Adorable Trinity. Sometimes she offered the pains and tears of Jesus for the negligences of her actions. Sometimes she made her oblation in union with the efficacious prayer of Jesus, and in the virtue of the Holy Ghost, for the emendation of her sins and the supply of her omissions. Sometimes in gratitude for blessings, she offered with her thanks "that sweetness which in the supercelestial treasury of the Divinity, beyond all sense, and with infinite pleasure, the Divine Persons communicate to each other." Another of her offerings was all the Passion of God's dear Son from the hour when He first wept as He was laid upon the straw in the manger, to the hour when He bowed His head upon the cross, and with a loud cry gave up the ghost. This was for her sins. Then, in reparation for her negligences, she offered to the Father all the most holy conversation of his Son, which was faultlessly perfect in all thoughts, words, and deeds, from the hour when he was sent into the world, to the hour when He presented to His Father the glory of His victorious

* In a similar manner, Schram, in his Mystical Theology, censures as almost heretical, ejaculations which St. Francis of Sales quotes with tenderness and relish. Yet in *doctrinal* matters it may be safer *for us* to follow the colder and more cautious author. Besides, he wrote later.

flesh. In union with her thanksgiving she offered back to God what He had given, and using the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a sweet-thrilling organ, she sounded it in the virtue of the Paraclete, and accompanying it with her songs, she sang to God praises on behalf of all the creatures in heaven, on earth, and beneath the earth, which have been, are, or ever shall be. At other times she made her offerings in union with the Divine Perfections; and our Lord Himself taught her to offer some actions to Him in union with the love by which God was made man. Once when she was offering to the Father all the holy conversation of His Only-Begotten, it seemed to her as if all the gems with which our Lord's vestments were adorned, moved in them, and gave out a most ravishing melody in praise of the Eternal Father; by which she knew how acceptable to God was this particular method of oblation.

At other times she made her offering in this way: "O Lord! I offer this work to Thee by Thine only Son, in the virtue of the Holy Ghost, to Thine eternal praise." It was then given her to see that by this intention her works were ennobled, and made magnificent beyond all human estimation; for, just as a thing looks green which is looked at through a green glass, or red through a red glass, so is every thing most pleasing and acceptable to God the Father, which is offered through His Only-Begotten Son. Sometimes she prayed our Lord that He would deign to offer for her all the perfections which He had on the day of His Ascension. At other times she offered her heart to God, to His eternal praise, to fulfil both in her body and her soul all His good pleasure. At this offering Jesus was pleased to show Himself so touched, that with great

joy, and the utmost sweetness, He stooped from the cross, and embracing her with unspeakable exultation, He gently pressed her to the Wound of His most holy Side, and said, "Welcome, My dearest daughter! you are the most soothing ointment of My wounds, and the most sweet alleviation of My pains." Our Lord taught her also, by saying Alleluia, to praise God in union with all the heavenly citizens, who incessantly praise Him by that word in heaven. Sometimes she offered to God all the holy conversation of Jesus to supply for her deficiency since the hour of her baptism, in not affording such a Guest a worthy mansion in her soul; or, at the elevation of the Host, she made the same offering for all her want of correspondence to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Or, again, in union with the most spotless limbs of our Blessed Lord, she commended to Him, as He Himself had taught her to do, all the limbs of her body, with every movement of them, that from that time they should never move except for His love, and to His praise and glory. When she did this, she beheld a golden belt issue from the Heart of God, and clasp her soul, so as to unite it in indissoluble love with our Lord.

These are given as specimens of St. Gertrude's method and spirit, which may be suggestive to ourselves; not as recommending any of them particularly as fitting for ourselves. What a different idea we should have of our dearest Lord, if we practised any thing of this sort! How would all our thoughts, and loves, and wishes, be quickly brought into subjection to Him! And does not this at least show us how the driest and most secular occupation may, with ease and

sweetness, be turned into a perpetual service of Divine Love?

2. Besides these ordinary actions belonging to our state and calling in life, our recreation and free time should be filled with meritorious actions; so that Jesus may always be reaping a harvest of glory and of love in our hearts. Alas! how many in communities lose in recreation all they have gained in observance and in prayer; so that mortification is an easier duty in the religious life than recreation. Mariano Sozzini, a father of the Roman Oratory, mentions that one of the fathers in his day used, as he went daily from the refectory to the recreation-room, to pray for the four first fruits of the Holy Ghost, charity, joy, peace, and patience: because, to make recreation at once general and useful, these four gifts were required. Some have attained to such a practice of the presence of God, that when out walking, and engaged in conversation, they have contrived to say to God in their hearts at nearly every step they took, "*for Thy sake, for Thy sake;* Propter Te, Propter Te;" and the same, while helping themselves at table, and at nearly all their gestures during meals. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi told her novices to offer to God's glory, if it were possible, the very winking of their eyes, and the slightest motions of their limbs; and she promised them, if they would act in this way, that they should go straight to heaven, after their death, without the pains of purgatory. In order to get this practice more deeply rooted in them, she often asked, first one, and then another, quite unexpectedly, and whatever they were doing, with what intention they were acting. If some one gave her no answer at once, she gathered

that she had begun her work without a previous intention, and reproved her for losing an occasion of merit, and taking sway a pleasure from God. It is mentioned, of course as a marvel, in the Life of Gregory Lopez, that for three whole years he had said in his heart at every respiration, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" and the habit was so formed in him, that if by chance he awoke during the night, he began to do the same. We cannot do these things, but it makes us love God more, to know that He has raised up men who could. Blessed be the Most Holy Trinity for all grace that has ever been in the spirits of angels, and the hearts of men!

There are many who desire to be all for God, and are fain to practise some such bodily austerities as they read of in the Lives of the Saints; but either their health is ailing and uncertain, or they have not the courage to do penance, or, which is most common of all, the health and courage both are wanting. We need a treatise on perfection for valetudinarians. People in ailing health can do both more and less than those in a downright illness: and the more and the less want distinguishing and explaining. For valetudinarians, in the modern sense of the word, spiritual books are almost silent, though in the third tract of Father Baker's Sancta Sophia there is much that is to the purpose. Yet St. Bernard is said to have purposely chosen unhealthy sites for his monasteries, because he considered weak health a great help to contemplation and interior exercise. But now-a-days nervousness, rheumatism, and an effeminate bringing up, do the work quite as effectually as the malaria of a woody swamp. Yet will any one rule that a valetudinarian

cannot be a saint, or practise heroic virtue? Now, if such persons are really honest with themselves, they should look out for penances which neither give them the bodily pain they cannot bear, nor interfere with their infirmities. It is plain that to be scrupulous about the use of our time, is just such a penance as this. We can promise God that we will never willingly waste our time in occupations by which we cannot merit. Now this resolution is by no means easy to keep in these days; it will often be felt as a yoke, interfering with our natural liberty. Yet if we keep it, we shall really be doing penance, and at the same time reaping an immense harvest for the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the good of souls. This does not by any means forbid recreations. Every one remembers the story of St. Charles Borromeo and his game of chess. When others were saying what they would forthwith begin to do if they knew they should die within an hour, the saint said he should go on with his chess; for he had begun it simply for God's glory, and he desired nothing better than to be called away in the midst of an action begun for the glory of God. It is easy to merit at play; for almost all pastimes are full of opportunities for the practice of virtues. It is quite possible to merit by reading a trashy novel, provided trashiness be its sole or worse defect; both because it may be a duty to distract the mind, which can only be distracted by an interesting occupation, and also because the forcible contrast between the unreality of the foolish tale, and those solemn realities of the faith which generally engage us, draws forth from us many an act of love, and many an act of thanksgiving, for the faith, and for grace. But it is

18

not easy to merit by idling about, by purposeless lounging, by wishing the time away, and voting things a bore, and by many kinds of frivolous, gossiping conversation. Religious people are, for the most part, not so scrupulous about the use of their time as they should be; yet, surely if, as we believe, St. Charles is a degree higher in heaven for his game of chess, it is a sad thing to miss so many opportunities of meriting, and so many occasions of advancing the interests of Jesus. Really the exact use of our time might almost be to many of us an index of the coolness or the fervour of our love. If an active practical Englishman was allowed a certain number of hours in a rich gold-digging, where the dirt was cleared away, and there was nothing to do but to pick out the pure ore, he would think a man mad who would suggest to him to suspend his toil, unless fatigue really compelled him to do so. And this is just our case with the ordinary actions of our life, and even with our recreations. The real toil has been done by our Blessed Lord; the stones and the mud were His share; for us there is nothing left, if we choose, but the precious ore; and the hours for our gold-digging are numbered, and we know not how near the term we are. Alas! we shall never know the value of time, till it has slipped from us, and left us in eternity. Dearest Lord! will it leave us then with Thee?

St. Gertrude once told our Lord she wished to build Him a spiritual ark, and she asked Him how she was to do it. He answered her as follows: "It is commonly said among you that the ark of Noe had three stories, and that the birds were in the upper one, men in the middle, and the beasts below. Now take this

for your model, and divide all your days upon this plan. From early morning to the hour of noon, you shall offer Me praises and thanks on behalf of the whole Church, with the warmest affection, for all the benefits I have ever conferred on men since creation, and especially for that adorable compassion which causes Me to let Myself be sacrificed on the altar in the Holy Mass, from dawn till noon, to the Eternal Father for men's salvation. While men make light of all this, and give themselves to pleasure and feasting, ungratefully forgetful of me, do you, in their stead, offer Me continual praises, and so will you seem to catch the volatile birds, and shut them up in the higher chamber of the ark. From noon to evening, be zealous daily to exercise yourself devoutly in good works, in union with the most holy intention wherewith all the works of My sacred Humanity were done, to make up for the negligences of the rest of the world; and this will be to congregate men in the middle chamber of the ark. From evening to dawn, in the bitterness of your heart, protest against men's impiety, whereby they not only refuse Me gratitude for what I have done, but provoke Me to anger by all manner of sins; and do you offer for their repentance the pain and bitterness of My most innocent Passion and Death, and thus will you gather the beasts into the lower chamber of the ark. Yet, while our dear Lord thus traced out for St. Gertrude the way in which she was to spend her day, He knew of all her toils and cares, and that by obedience to her rule, she must, with her spiritual daughters, take her daily recreations, as well as discharge the minute duties of monastic government.

3. There is another and most profitable practice,—to

do for your solitude what you do for your occupations. When you are alone, or awake in the night, offer up your solitude in union with the solitude of Jesus in the sepulchre and in the tabernacle; and do this, to impetrate for yourself and for those you love, the grace of a good death. 1. That you may die in the grace of God. 2. And with great merit, so as to glorify God all the more in heaven. 3. And having had great fruit in saving the souls for whom Christ died and was buried. 4. That you may die without fame and glory, as Jesus died without honour between two thieves. 5. And without any obligation of going to purgatory, 6, and leaving behind you a great treasure of satisfactions which you do not need yourself, and so which can be added to the treasures out of which the Church grants indulgences; and 7, that you may glorify God on earth even when you are dead, by the memory of your good works, by salutary advices given, or devout books written, or the abiding fruit of your prayers.

4. Through the practice of oblation we can merit by the commonest things, if we are in a state of grace. Every time we merit we give God a distinct glory, the interests of Jesus a distinct advancement, and the souls of men almost innumerable benefits through the communion of saints. Now, here is another way of meriting by common things,—rising to God by the sight of creatures. This, as you know, has been one of the commonest and most fervent practices of the saints. Lancisius says, You go out of your house and you see some people talking, pray that they may say no idle words for which they will have to give account. You hear the howling of the wind, pray for those who

are at sea. You pass by a tavern, and hear the noise of those within, pray that they may not offend God, and that those who have done so may go to confession. When St. Athanasius sent for St. Pambo to leave the desert and come to Alexandria, the holy abbot saw a gaily-dressed actress in the streets; whereupon he began to weep. When he was asked why he did so, he answered, "Two things move me; one is the damnation of that woman; and another is, that I do not take as much pains to please God as she does to please wicked men." You see even sinful things were steps to God for him. When you hear the pattering of the rain, thank God for it, and desire to offer Him as many good acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, thanksgiving, humility, adoration, and petition, as there are drops in that shower; ask for the continual influx of the helps of grace in good measure, heaped up, shaken together, and running over, by which you and others may always act in the most perfect manner, and glorify God in the greatest possible degree.

When you are walking out or travelling, and pass any hamlet, village, or town, or the house of some great man,—1, ask God, by the merits of those who dwell there, to have mercy upon you; 2, give Him thanks for all His blessings, past, present, and future, on the inhabitants; 3, commend to Him all their necessities, and beg Him to hear their prayers; 4, grieve for all the sins committed there; 5, ask for the remission of them; 6, commend to God the souls of those departed there. Surius tells us, in the life of St. Fulgentius, that when the saint went to Rome, and beheld all the palaces of the nobility, he cried out, "How beautiful must be the heavenly Jerusalem, if

the earthly Rome shines thus! And if such dignity is given in this world to those who love vanity, what must be the glory of the saints who contemplate the truth!" We read of St. Martin of Tours, when visiting his diocese, that he was deeply affected by the sight of some cormorants fishing, because they represented to him in so lively a manner the devil's ways in catching souls. St. Bonaventure tells us that St. Francis carried the same practice to quite a remarkable extent; and Ribadeneyra says of St. Ignatius, "We have often seen him from the most trifling things rise to God, who is mighty in the least things; the sight of a little plant, a single leaf or fruit, a worm or an insect, would raise him in a moment above the heavens."

Monsignor Strambi gives the following account of the Blessed Paul of the Cross, the Founder of the Passionists.* His holy intentions and desires were rewarded by the Lord with great spiritual consolation; and in his journey to make the visitation of his houses he fed his spirit with the sweet food of recollection. Coming once to the Ritiro of St. Eutizio, he turned to his companion, and said, "Whose are these lands?" His companion replied, "The lands of Gallese." But Paul, in a louder voice, said, "Whose are these lands, I say?" His companion not understanding the drift of his question, after a few paces the holy Father turned to him, with his countenance shining like the sun, and cried out, "Whose are these lands? Ah! you do not understand me; they belong to the great God!" and instantly the impetuosity of his love lifted him and carried him some little distance

* Vita. p. 137.

along the road. Another time he was going from Terracina to Ceccano, through the wood of Fossanova, and after he had visited the monastery where St. Thomas Aquinas died, and was come into a thicket, he began to cry out to his companion impetuously, "Oh, do you not hear how these trees and leaves are crying out, Love God, Love God!" And then kindling more and more with Divine Love, his face began to dart out bright rays, and he kept exclaiming, "Oh, how is it you do not love God? How is it you do not love God?" And when they had got back again into the Roman road, he said to every one he met, "My brother! love God, love God, who deserves it so much! Do you not hear the very leaves of the trees crying out to us to love God? O Love of God! Love of God!" And he spoke with such unction, that the passers by burst into tears. We read of him in another place that every thing served to remind him of God, and he used to imagine that all creatures cried out to entreat the love of man for Him who made them. He was often observed when walking in the fields, especially during the spring season, to gaze earnestly at the flowers as he went along and to touch them with his stick, saying, "Hold your tongues, Hold your tongues!" And he used to tell his religious that the flowers were always calling upon them, to lift up their hearts in love and adoration toward their heavenly Creator.

As tastes in devotion are so various, my readers will forgive the following long extract from the Life of Father Peter Faber, the companion of St. Ignatius, by Orlandini. He was particularly eminent for his gift of turning every thing to prayer. When he came near any city or town he used to pour out prayers for the

inhabitants, and beg of God's mercy that the angel of the place, and the guardian angels of the inhabitants, might guard it with a special protection. He invoked also the patron saints of the place, and implored them to return thanks, or to beg pardon, or to impetrate grace for the inhabitants, and to supply for all their negligence and omission in these respects, that God might not be defrauded of any of His glory. In hiring a new house or changing his lodgings, it was his custom, when he first entered the house, to go and kneel in all the rooms, corners, and cupboards that he could, and pray God to drive away the evil spirits, and all dangers and sorrows from the place; and in his prayer he remembered all those who had ever lived or ever should live there, and entreated that no injury might happen there to their souls. So studiously did he seek in every thing materials for prayer, that when he went to the palace of a certain prince to hear a sermon in the chapel, and was repulsed by a porter who did not know him, he found in this rudeness nothing but materials for prayer. What wonder if he had prayer so much at heart when he was well, that he should be assiduous in it when he was ill? When he was sick at Louvain, and unable to sleep, his painful watching only furnished him with materials for prayer. When his weakened head could hardly endure the vehemence of his headaches, he did nothing but make prayer out of our Lord's crown of thorns, until he was so inflamed with love that he melted into sweet tears. This perpetual pursuit of prayer he nourished and fed with variety in devotion. The life of Christ was indeed the food of his daily contemplation; for, where can the mind enjoy greater abundance as well as greater sweet-

ness? Nevertheless, to foster his piety, he had invented manifold methods of prayer, suggested either by his accurate reading, or by doctrines, or by the impulse of the Holy Ghost. But there were three especially which he found so useful as well as so sweet, and yet quite easy, that he used to recommend confessors to teach them to their penitents.

First, he had a great devotion to litanies, used them assiduously, and applied them to every occasion. He used them not merely to ask for blessings, which is the common use of litanies, but for the purposes of praise, thanksgiving, congratulation, and other exercises of the virtue of religion. One of his practices was to enter into the blessed court of heaven, and there, at the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, he would call on the Father to delight in the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Son to do the same in the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit in the Father and the Son; and by this expression he meant the mutual gratulation of the Divine Persons which is called in the schools complacency. Then he besought the Queen of heaven to adore, in his name, or the name of some other, living or dead, the Most Holy Trinity; and then he implored the Holy Trinity to bless our Lady for all the gifts which pass to earth through her. Then he went to each choir of angels, and each order of the blessed, begging of them to offer thanks and praise for him or others to God, our Lady, or particular angels and saints.

His second mode of prayer was to go through all the mysteries of our Lord's life and death, skilfully accommodating them to the time and occasion, and then by each one of them calling separately on the

Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, and the inhabitants of heaven.

His third manner of prayer he framed from the precepts of God and the Church, the doctrines of the faith, the seven mortal sins and the opposite virtues, the works of mercy, the five senses of man, and the three faculties of the soul. These he recalled in order, one after the other. The very variety of the things suggested various affections, sometimes petitions for pardon, sometimes for gifts, sometimes thanksgivings, not for himself only, or the living, but for the dead also, begging God to condone to them whatever they might still owe Him on the score of the first commandment, or the second, and so on, and the same with the sins, the works of mercy, the senses, and the powers of the soul.

These three methods of prayer were quite familiar to him. Neither must we omit to observe how much a knowledge of doctrine helped him, as Orlandini expressly says. He also fell in with a book of St. Gertrudes', out of which he acknowledged that he had drawn ample materials for prayer to his own great profit. The variety of the ecclesiastical times and seasons also supplied him with an admirable variety of devotions. And this variety, this vicissitude of successive devotions, he found so to sustain and whet his appetite at the banquet of prayer, that he never went to any religious action out of habit or custom or mere rule, whether it were to his meditation or to mass; but came daily new and fresh to his most habitual devotions; just as Blessed Paul of the Cross confessed that he never remembered having once said mass out of mere habitude, which few priests so old could say.

There are others to whose fervour such a variety seems fatal, so differently does it please God to lead souls that are dear to Him: and all His ways are good, because they are His. Few indeed are like Marie Denise of the Visitation, whom God led by the way of multiplicity of devotions; so that when one of the community saw her manuscript book with all her services and intentions noted down, and said to her, "Dear Sister Marie Denise, why do you say such a multitude of prayers?" the sister replied, "Because God has shown me that He created me for this end."

There is a great difference between having a variety of mental devotions, and loading ourselves with an indiscreet number of vocal prayers; and what spiritual writers say of the one case does not always apply equally to the other. Yet, there is no mistake more common than to confound the two. Now, the loading of ourselves with an immense number of vocal prayers is not always, (for there is no *always* in spiritual science, except where sin is in question,) but almost always, a simple evil. How many are there who began their flight well, but soon grew weak and weary on the wing, and at last fell to the earth, entangled in litanies, overloaded with Memorares, encumbered with rosaries, or helplessly pinioned by the obligations of a score of Third Orders and Confraternities! They have ruined themselves with holy things: and have done so, ten to one, without any one's knowledge or permission.

Having a great variety of mental devotions may often be an evil, but it is a different thing from this; and the unqualified censure which some rigorous authors pass upon all such variety, is certainly not in keeping either with the practice of the saints, or with

the milder teaching of their works. There is nothing a man so soon becomes attached to as a system of spiritual direction, and so completely does his own one favourite way seem to him the sole safe way, that he can hardly realize the diversity of God's operations, or give the Holy Ghost liberty in the hearts of those whom he is training. We know well enough that solid mortification and persevering self-abjection are the real roads to the highest sanctity; but are persons to sit down weeping by the low wayside of the most ordinary attainments, unless they have the heart to scale the rugged heights? Are there no other paths of love that lie higher on the mountain breast, above the plain, though lower far than those ambitious pinnacles? Ah! how many are sent low, held low, and forced lower, by being unwisely forced too high! "A good superior," said St. Jane Frances de Chantal, "must learn to fly low as well as to fly high;" and the first is a harder duty than the last; for, mark the words, it is not to be low, or to rest low, but to fly low. Now, it may be quite true that the shortest and directest road to high sanctity is found in keeping to one thing, one subject of meditation, one examen, one exercise of devotion, and that this painful unity should be kept up for some years without a change, as a celebrated writer recommends. Yet who is sufficient for these things? People living in the world, without the helps of a religious house, with no noviciate, no set penances in community, but with a thousand necessary distracting duties, and the unavoidable diversions of social intercourse,—how are they to do these things? And yet they have a call to love; they will not to be kept down. You must have a process for withering their souls, or you must

fill them with the dews of heaven. Hence it is we so often see those spiritual anomalies of a devout life, half filled with the practices of the demure cloister, and half with the appurtenances of a London season. And what comes of these fitful vagaries? Unhappiness, failure, and vehement self-abandonment to worldly pleasures, as if in revenge for past strictness, and a lower lowness of the Christian life, which I hardly like to think of. Any thing comes of these experiments, except high sanctity, or low sanctity either. They result in no sanctity at all.

There are not a few who think that devotion to be solid must be dry. But does the dry system answer? We hear people condemning unlucky devotees, because they are fond of functions and benedictions, of warm devotions and of pictures of the Madonna, of feasts and foreign practices, for with such, an Italian devotion is something next door to a heresy; I suppose because it has the remarkable bad fortune to come from the Holy City! Now, does it follow, that because persons are fond of these things, they have nothing else in their piety? Because they have one characteristic of good Catholics, are they *therefore* destitute of the others? Because they like flowers, do they reject fruit? Oh, but mortification is the thing, and the conscientious discharge of our relative duties. Very true; and pray, what mortifications do you practise, honest disciple of dry devotion? Are they exterior, the hair-shirt, the discipline? Or interior, loving to be spoken ill of, and lightly esteemed? And how do you discharge your relative duties? Almsgiving, for example, is one, and to keep yourself unspotted from the world is another. How do these things fare with you? Be honest with

yourselves, or, much more, be honest with God. Whether we want mortifications or relative duties to edify us, I suspect we must seek them with the devotees, not with you. If, instead of the definition of the Immaculate Conception, you would have enthusiasm added to the number of mortal sins, to what post of honour are we to assume tepidity? It is just possible that enthusiasm may not be quite the monster evil of the world: at least, we have not suffered much from its ravages here in England. And anyhow, in spiritual matters, what we have most to dread is the evil we are most likely to fall into: and I assure you, you at least have no danger to apprehend from hot-hearted enthusiasm or ultra-piety.

On the other hand, it may not unfrequently happen that souls, who want something beyond this dry solidity, (if any thing dry can be solid in a religion which is all of love,) may, by being allowed scope for the fervour of first beginnings in devotional variety, diversion, interest, and even change, ultimately mount to higher things, and climb with a more manly courage the rougher and directer roads to holiness. But see how God is calling souls, and lead them by the gentlest and most winning ways, unless there be a clear vocation to the hard and rough. Many are lost, because they are forced too high, and many more, because they are made to fear sensible devotion, and to believe that dryness is solidity. Oh, do any thing, I beseech you, rather than tire people of their good, compassionate God! Rather interest them in Him, if you can, and all you can. Souls are gravely warned, without regard to time, or place, or person, or condition, to be detached from the gifts of God, and to eschew sweet feelings, and gushing

fervours, when the danger is rather in their attachment to their carriages and horses, their carpets and their old china, the parks and the opera, and the dear bright world. Why, if the poor Belgravians could get a little attachment, were it only to an image or a holy water-stoup, and I care not how inordinate, it would be a welcome miracle of grace, considering all they have to keep them far from God, for they move in a sphere which seems to lie outside His omnipresence. No! no! the warnings of St. Theresa to Barefooted Carmelites are hardly fit for such as those. Oh, better far to flutter like a moth round the candles of a gay benediction, than lie without love in the proprieties of sensual ease and worldly comfort, which seem, but perhaps are not, (and you cannot tell,) without actual sin.

5. Another method of glorifying God by little and common things, is the practice of ejaculatory prayer. This is not the place to enter at length into this subject. Its connection with the matter now before us is obvious. It was the chief practice of the Fathers of the Desert, by which they raised themselves to such heights of sanctity. St. Francis of Sales says, "That the great fabric of devotion leans upon this exercise, that it can supply the defects of all other prayers, and that all other prayers cannot supply the defect of it." The Abbot Isaac in Cassian, tells us wonderful things of that single ejaculation, "Deus in Adjutorium, &c." When Father Brandano was going into Portugal, he asked St. Ignatius in what devotions the scholastics of the society were to be exercised. The Saint replied, "That, besides the usual formal devotions, they were to exercise themselves in seeking our Lord's presence

in all things, in talking, walking, looking about them, listening, thinking, and every thing, as it is certain that the Divine Majesty is in all things in at least three ways, by essence, presence, and power." He said, "that this exercise of finding God in every thing was less laborious than meditations on abstract matters, and causes God to visit us in wonderful ways, even for one brief ejaculation." Thus we may sigh for God's glory, send up to heaven one arrow-like word about the interests of Jesus in the streets of London, or breathe a little prayer for souls, wherever we are. Without any constraint we may make scores of them in a day; and each one is more to God than a battle gained, or a scientific discovery, or a crystal palace, or a change of ministry, or a political revolution. Many of these ejaculations are indulgenced, and thus the same little brief sentence will, 1. gain merit, 2. impetrate grace, 3. satisfy for sin, 4. glorify God, 5. honour Jesus and His Mother, 6. convert sinners, and 7. soothe with substantial indulgence the Holy souls in Purgatory. Can we do nothing more for Jesus in this respect than we have done hitherto? O Love! Love! You yourself must tell us, and teach us how, and remind us when we forget.

But in order to attain all these ends, it is not enough that our vocal ejaculations should be uttered in a slovenly, off-hand way, or without an inward attention. It is often the fashion now-a-days to speak with disesteem of vocal prayer; yet it should not be forgotten that there have been heresies on the subject in very modern times, and that the censure of condemned propositions lies upon them. It was by means of vocal prayer that the Fathers of the Desert rose to such

heights of sancity, and Father Baker tells us* that even now God occasionally leads souls thereby to the heights of contemplation and mystical union. He gives the following reasons for the effect of vocal prayer being different on the ancients to what it is on us. "One reason was their incomparably more abstraction of life, more rigorous solitude and almost perpetual silence, of the practice of which in these days, it is believed, we are not capable. A second was their fasts, abstinences, and other austerities beyond the strength of our infirm corporal complexions. A third was their external employments out of the set times of prayer, the which did far better dispose souls to recollection, to attendance on the Divine Inspirations, than those ordinarily practised in these days."

As Father Baker's work is so rare, my readers will thank me for the clauses in which he sums up his doctrine concerning vocal prayer. "Now, whereas to all manner of prayer there is necessarily required an attention of the mind, without which it is not prayer, we must know that there are several kinds and degrees of attention; all of them good, but yet one more perfect and profitable than another. For, 1. There is an attention or express reflection on the words and sense of the sentence pronounced by the tongue, or revolved in the mind. Now, this attention being, in vocal prayer, necessarily to vary and change, according as sentences in the Psalms, &c. do succeed one another, cannot so powerfully and efficaciously fix the mind or affections on God; because they are presently to be recalled to new considerations or succeeding affections. This is

* Sancta Sophia. i. 202. and ii. 8. et seqq.

the lowest and most imperfect degree of attention; of which all souls are in some measure capable; and the more imperfect they are, the less difficulty there is in yielding it; for souls that have good and established affections to God, can hardly quit a good affection by which they are united to God, and which they find gustful and profitable for them, to exchange it for a new one succeeding in the office; and if they should, it would be to their prejudice.

"The second degree is that of souls indifferently well practised in internal prayer, who coming to the reciting of the Office, and either bringing with them, or by occasion of such reciting, raising in themselves an efficacious affection to God, do desire, without variation, to continue it with as profound a recollectedness as they may, not at all heeding whether it be suitable to the sense of the present passage which they pronounce. This is an attention to God, though not to the words, and is far more beneficial than the former. And, therefore, to oblige any souls to quit such an attention for the former, would be both prejudicial and unreasonable. For, since all vocal prayers, in Scripture and otherwise, were ordained only to this end, to supply and furnish the soul that needs, with good matter of affection, by which it may be united to God, a soul that hath already attained to that end, which is union, as long as it lasts ought not to be separated therefrom, and be obliged to seek a new means, till the virtue of the former be spent.

"A third and most sublime degree of attention to the Divine Office is, that whereby vocal prayers do become mental: that is, whereby souls most profoundly, and with a perfect simplicity united to God, can yet,

without any prejudice to such union, attend also to the sense and spirit of each passage that they pronounce; yea, thereby find their affection, adhesion, and union, increased, and more simplified. This attention comes not till a soul be arrived to perfect contemplation, by means of which the spirit is so habitually united to God, and besides, the imagination so subdued to the spirit, that it cannot rest upon any thing that will distract it.

"Happy are those souls, of which, God knows, the number is very small, that have attained to this third degree; the which must be ascended to by a careful practice of the two former in their order, especially of the second degree. And, therefore, in reciting of the Office, even the more imperfect souls may do well, whensoever they find themselves in a good measure recollected, to continue so long as they well can, preserving as much stability in their imagination as may be. And the best means to beget and increase such a recollected way of saying the Divine Office is the practice of Internal Prayer, either in meditation or immediate acts of the will; the only aim and end whereof is, the procuring an immovable attention and adhesion of the spirit to God."*

6. It is as well to repeat again, that we may thus offer, in union with the merits of our dear Lord, and of all those sublime supernatural treasures which we considered in the last chapter, not only our ordinary actions, but every thing also that happens to us. Our little sufferings, pains, contradictions, and weariness, may thus every one of them be made missioners to

* ii. 13, 14, 15.

speed the faith, apostles to convert sinners, and angels to praise the Majesty of God. Our little mortifications too, few and cowardly as they may be, with the stripes and thorns, the lance and the nails, touching them, can draw the Heart of Jesus toward us and others with tremendous power. The grace we have received during the day may be doubled by being offered up at night in union with His grace from whom ours came. Thus does Jesus help us to love Him; thus does He make us kings and priests already. If we truly mourn because He is offended, if we truly thirst after the glory of our merciful Father, if we are touched with pity for poor, graceless, or tempted souls, see what marvels we can do without so much as turning out of our way, or distracting ourselves from our business, or even, so our dear Lord has contrived, omitting our pastimes and recreations. Verily, all things are meant for Jesus; and when we see what we can do, and, alas! what we have not done, we may begin to think that there is no corner of earth where the harvest of God's glory is scantier or less thriving than in our own poor hearts.

Is there not a nursery tale of some one who turned to gold whatever he touched, and was soon embarrassed by his marvellous gift? This is our case under the Gospel, under the law of grace. All we touch turns to gold, by intention or oblation. Yet our gift need never embarrass us. We shall never fill God with glory, nor heaven with merits. But it will be a sad thing at the end of life to look back upon the millions of wasted opportunities. But now, some one may say, how are we to note them, and to remember them now, as they come before us in such multitudes, and so incessantly? I answer, "Not by any rule which can be given; nor by

any formal method which can be devised. *You must love. You must love. You must love.* There is no other way. There is no help for it. Love will teach you every thing, and tell you the secrets of Jesus. Love will make things easy and sweet. Love will be a new nature to you. There is nothing you want which love will not do for you, or get for you, and nothing else but love can do it. You must love." And is it hard to love Jesus? Oh, surely, the difficulty is not to love Him; the difficulty rather is, to love Him little, if we love at all!

I wish we could really see and feel what it is to be allowed to please God. If we saved the life of the queen's child, we should not easily forget the grateful look of the royal mother's face; it would be long before her burning words of thanks died away in our ears; a sovereign's tears, and those tears of joy, are not things to be readily forgotten. But what a very unimportant thing this is compared with being allowed if it were but once in our lives, to please God! The thought really grows upon us till it overshadows our spirits. Think what we are, our origin, our rebellion, our natural infirmities, our personal vileness, our horrible guilt, our despicable unloveliness; and then there is God, the Invisible, all Holy, Incomprehensible God, and he stoops to be pleased with us, and He longs that we should try to please Him, and He contrives all nature so as that by grace we may please Him more, and He gives us numerous supernatural ways and powers of pleasing Him! The immensity of this condescension is simply inexpressible. Oh, that our dearest Lord would enlarge our hearts, that we might take it in! But why talk of taking in one of His

condescensions? Why, he makes our hearts large enough to take Himself in, Body, Soul, Divinity! Thus our thoughts run off to another condescension, another love. This is always the way; one overtops another; there is no end; climb one height, and there are higher heights; and all is love! love! love! Dear God! dear God! St. Gertrude said we might call Him so! and what else can we call Him? Oh, why do we not love Him? Most dear God! So dear beyond word or thought!

If we think of these three things, God, ourselves, and the supernaturalness of the system in which we are, we shall surely at length come to see that the capabilities we, who are neither saints, nor like saints, nor in sight of being saints, have of glorifying God are positively awful and frightening. First, if we unite our actions with those of Jesus, they gain almost an infinite value. What we have to offer to God is something like infinite. Nay, we can offer Jesus, who is infinite. We can offer God His Equal! and that in every thing we do, or say, or think, or suffer. Next, consider the multiplicity of our actions. There is no reckoning them. They run ahead of our figures almost at once. Two men are advised to get up early in the morning to make half an hour's meditation. One does, and the other does not. The one who does, merits, and so glorifies God more, unspeakably more than all physical science or art unions have glorified Him since the Flood; 1, by the mortification of rising early; 2, by his modesty in dressing; 3, by his act of the Presence of God; 4, by his sign of the cross: 5, by his preparatory prayers; 6, by his meditation; 7, by the penance of his posture, weariness or distraction; 8, by the resolutions at the

end; 9, by each ejaculation all through it; and 10, by the obedience of the whole duty. It would be more correct to say that each of these ten merits were bundles of many merits. But put them at ten. This one little practice would give the following results. In each year he would glorify God three thousand six hundred and fifty times by that one action, and each of these times he would please God, and to be allowed to do so once in all eternity would be an unspeakable condescension, and each time he would glorify Him more than all physical science has ever done, because he would glorify Him supernaturally.

After the multiplicity of our actions, consider the ease of this devotion of offering them up to God in union with the merits of His Son. One glance at Jesus, and it is done. There needs no word, no sigh, no train of thought. Love looks to Jesus, and all is accomplished. Then remember, each merit implies a new degree of grace, and each degree of grace a corresponding degree of eternal glory, if we die with the gift of perseverance. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived one single degree of beatific glory; and then we have to multiply all this millions and millions of times; and if we fell into deadly sin, and then had the grace to ask, just to ask contritely, and in our Lord's own easy way, for the Precious Blood, Jesus thinks it nothing merely to forgive us, but He must also put back to our account all this formidable sum total of merits; so passionately does He long to have us with Him in heaven for ever! And yet there are such things as lukewarm Catholics! My Jesus! and how patiently Thou bearest with them! Thou hast covered the whole earth with a net of love, which Thou hast

been busily devising from all eternity! We break it all to pieces, and what dost Thou do, sweetest, dearest, kindest Lord? Thou settest to work with the most unconquerable love to net a new one of merciful precept and cheerful fear, and catchest in that the foolish souls that would not be caught by love!

Oh, how sweet it is to be saved by Jesus! it seems as if it were better than if we had never fallen. It is such a joy to owe every thing to Jesus. Such a joy not to be able to do without Him for one moment. Such a joy to find Him everywhere, and always to find Him laying us under new obligations, and binding us with fresh chains of love! Oh, that we were bound so fast to Him that we could never get loose from Him! But this is the heavenliness of purgatory, that we are His, His own, His very own, unalterably, for ever! Surely Adam's nine hundred years of penance among the brambles of the lonely world would be worth living, if only we might be allowed to make one heart love Jesus a single degree more! And yet here we are in His blessed Church, where the beginning, middle, and end of our whole religion is, that all things are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's!

If there is one thing more inexpressibly touching than another, it is God, the Everlasting Holiness, begging glory of His creatures on His own earth. The love it breeds is sharp as a smart. It is like a father suffering martyrdom for his guilty child. And then to see Him, the suppliant Creator, the Almighty mendicant, refused the alms He asks! Does it not make us wild? Wild with love? And who refuses Him so often as ourselves? Alas! who will give to our eyes

rivers of tears to weep day and night for this? Verily it is more inconceivable that men should not love God than that there should be Three Persons in One God! And yet, what can be more winning than God, what more fatherly than God? He asks glory of us, asks glory of *us*, such as we are! Why, why do we not love Him? What can He do more? He asked that Himself ages ago: What can I do that I have not done? Yes, what can He do more? Oh, look children of God, look! He is in His own world, behaving and arranging all, blessed be His most dear Majesty! just as if we, not He, were the final cause of all creation!



CHAPTER VII.

Thanksgiving.

IT is plain that what has been insisted upon in the foregoing chapters comes to this, that the Gospel being altogether a law of love, it is not enough simply to save our own souls, or to be more accurate, it is very much against our saving our own souls, if we do not try to do something for the souls of others, whether by action or by prayer. And, furthermore, the Gospel being a law of love, our religion must be as much as possible a service of love, and consequently we run a great risk of being lost if we treat this life as simply an opportunity of getting to heaven on the easiest terms, and by the barest observance of necessary precepts, putting aside as things which do not concern ourselves, the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the saving of souls. I have not asked much of you; I have not put before you either bodily austerities or retirement from the world; I have not told you to aim at heights of supernatural prayer,

or at the love of suffering, or at any difficult life-long strain after interior recollection and the sensible Presence of God. I have done no more than put before you practices and counsels of the saints by which you may occupy yourselves more with God, and do so easily and lovingly. I have not even said, You shall at least do so much as this, or, This you must certainly not omit; I have left it to yourselves and to your own love. I am not making rules; I would fain persuade some one, one would be enough, to love God a little more for His own dear sake. And the order of my subject naturally leads me now to the subject of thanksgiving. We have seen that in order to practise intercession, our Blessed Lord, in His unspeakable love, first gives us all His own treasures that we may offer them back to Him with amazing efficacy, and then, besides that, allows us to make our own most trivial actions almost infinite by uniting them to His merits and intentions. But these two things are not available for intercession only; they serve equally for thanksgiving, and for praise and desire. I will speak in this chapter of thanksgiving; and then of praise and desire in the next.

If we had to name any one thing which seems unaccountably to have fallen out of most men's practical religion altogether, it would be the duty of thanksgiving. It would not be easy to exaggerate the common neglect of this duty. There is little enough of prayer; but there is still less thanksgiving. For every million of Paters and Aves, which rise up from the earth to avert evils or to ask graces, how many do you suppose follow after in thanksgiving for the evils averted or the graces given? Alas! it is not hard to

find the reason of this. Our own interests drive us obviously to prayer; but it is love alone which leads to thanksgiving. A man who only wants to avoid hell knows that he must pray; he has no such strong instinct impelling him to thanksgiving. It is the old story. Never did prayer come more from the heart than the piteous cry of those ten lepers who beheld Jesus entering into a town. Their desire to be heard made them courteous and considerate. They stood afar off, lest He should be angry if they with their foul disease came too near Him. Alas! they did not truly know that dear Lord, nor how He had lowered Himself to be counted as a leper for the sons of men. They lifted up their voice, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When the miracle was wrought, the nine went on in selfish joy to show themselves to the priest; but one, only one, and he an outcast Samaritan, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God, and he fell on his face before our Saviour's feet, giving thanks. Even the Sacred Heart of Jesus was distressed, and as it were astonished, and He said, "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger!" How many a time have we not caused the same sad surprise to the Sacred Heart!

When the neglect of a duty is so shocking as is surely the neglect of thanksgiving, it is desirable to show the amount of obligation which rests upon us in the matter; and this can best be done by the authority of Scripture. St. Paul tells the Ephesians* that we are to

* v. 20.

be "giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father." Again, we are* "to abound unto all simplicity, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God." The Philippians† are admonished, "Be nothing solicitous: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God." To the Colossians‡ the apostle says, "As ye have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and confirmed in the faith, as also you have learned, abounding in Him with thanksgiving;" and again,§ "Be instant in prayer; watching in it in thanksgiving." Creatures are said‖ to be created to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful, and by them that have known the truth; "for every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected, that is received with thanksgiving." And it was the very characteristic of the heathen,¶ that "when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, nor gave thanks."

What is our life on earth but a preparation for our real life in heaven? and yet praise and thanksgiving are the very occupations of our life in heaven. What is the language of the angels, ancients, and living creatures of the apocalypse, but, "Amen! Benediction and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever: Amen?" We are constantly invoking our Blessed Lady, the angels, and the saints, and we know and are sure that they are always praying for us in heaven; yet am I not right in saying, that when we make pictures of heaven in our own minds, it is not so often prayer we picture,

* 2 Cor. ix. 11. † iv. 6. ‡ ii. 7. § iv. 2. ‖ 1 Tim. iv. 3. ¶ Rom. i. 21.

as praise and thanksgiving? Nay, sometimes when death has been at hand, the life of heaven has cast its light forward over God's servants; they have seemed almost to forget prayer, and, as if they were already in hearing of the angelic songs, and had caught the note, they occupy with thanksgiving those awful hours which most of all in life seem to need petition and struggling prayer. Thus when the blessed Paul of the Cross was lying dangerously ill, he passed his days in the utterance of thanksgiving and praise, often repeating with particular devotion those words from the Gloria in excelsis, "We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory!" This had always been his favourite ejaculation, and he had frequently exhorted his religious to use it whenever they had any particular undertaking in hand, saying, with peculiar earnestness, "For the great glory of God." At other times, prostrating himself in spirit before the throne of the Most Blessed Trinity, he fervently exclaimed, "Sanctus, Sanctus," or "Benedictio et claritas," &c., which he used to call the song of paradise.

Now, the Church on earth reflects the Church in heaven; the worship of the one is the echo of the worship of the other. If the life in heaven is one of praise and thanksgiving, so in its measure must be the life on earth. The very centre of all our worship is the Eucharist; that is, as the word imports, a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Every thing catches its tone from this. Every thing in the Church radiates out from the Blessed Sacrament. The spirit of the Eucharist must be found everywhere. Even the Jews felt that all prayer must one day cease, except the prayer of thanksgiving, as Wetstein tells us out of the Talmud. But we

have to do with it now as part of our service of love. Let us suppose that the true idea of worship was the one implied in the common practice of most men; that it was simply a matter of prayer to a superior Being. What relation does this put us in with God? He is our King, our Superior, a keeper of treasures, Himself infinite wealth. We go to Him to ask for something. He is to us what a rich man is to a beggar. Our own interest is the prominent part of the matter. Or we are afraid of His justice. We desire to be let off our punishment, and have our sins forgiven. He is pitiful, and will hear us if we are importunate. Taking prayer only as the whole of worship, we can rise no higher than this. It is all very true, and very necessary besides. Prayer can teach us to depend on God, and answered prayer to trust in Him. But Infinite Goodness will not let us rest on such terms with Him. We are to be with Him to all eternity; He is to be our everlasting joy; to know Him and to love Him is life; and the love of Him is the joyful praise of Him for ever. As the spirit of oblation, the permission to make God presents, at once brings in a dearer and more familiar relation with God, so also does the spirit of thanksgiving. To thank a benefactor simply to get more from him, is not thanksgiving, but a flattering form of petition. We thank God because we love Him, because His love of us touches us, surprises us, melts us, wins us. Indeed, so much is thanksgiving a matter of love, that we shall thank Him most of all in heaven, when He has given us His crowning gift of the Beatific Vision; when He has given us all of Himself we can contain, and so there is nothing left for us to receive. Thanksgiving is, therefore, of the very essence of Ca-

tholic worship ; and as the practice of it increases our love, so does the neglect of it betoken how little love we have.

Ah! if we have reason to pity God, if we may dare so to speak with St. Alphonso, because men sin against His loving Majesty, still more reason have we to do so when we see how scanty and how cold are the thanksgivings offered up to Him. Nothing is so odious among men as ingratitude; yet it is the daily and hourly portion of Almighty God. There is no telling what He has done for men ; there is no exhausting the mines of His abundant mercy implied by each one of his titles, Creator, King, Redemer, Father, Shepherd. He loves to be thanked, because all He wants of us is love, and that He should please to want it is itself an infinite act of love. He had chosen to put His glory upon our gratitude ; and yet we will not give it Him ! What is worst of all, this affront does not come, like open sin, from those who are His enemies, and in whose conversion His compassion can gain such glory among men ; but it comes from His own people, from those who frequent the sacraments and make a profession of piety, from those whom He is daily loading with the especial and intimate gifts of His Holy Spirit. Many of us are shocked with sin and sacrilege ; we go sad and downcast in the days of the world's carnival ; scandal makes us smart ; heresy is positive suffering, a pungent bitterness, like smoke in our eyes. It is well. Yet we too go on refusing God His glory by our neglect of thanksgiving. We could glorify Him so chiefly : and yet it hardly comes into our thoughts. Can we then be said to love Him truly and really ? What have we to do, how often shall I say it? To love God, and to get Him

glory. God forbid we should so much as dream that we had any thing else to do. Let us go then about the world seeking these neglected pearls of our heavenly Father's glory, and offering them to Him. How is it that we have the heart to wish to do any thing but this? Some of His servants have even desired not to die, that they might stay on earth to glorify Him by more suffering. Such wishes are not for us; but they may do us good, for they help to show us how little love we have. And I must think that to find this out is every thing. I can believe that men are deceived, and think they love God when they do not love Him, or that they wish to love Him and do not know how. But can any one know how little he loves God, and how easily he can love Him more, and yet not wish to do so? Jesus died to prevent the possibility of this; and can He have died in vain?

You must bear with me if I repeat this once more. We do not find fault with sinners who are living out of the grace of God, and away from the Sacraments, because they do not make thanksgiving. They have something else to do. They have to do penance, and to reconcile themselves with God, and wash their souls afresh in the Precious Blood of Jesus. The neglect of thanksgiving is an ingratitude which our dear Lord has to impute to his own forgiven children, who are living in His peace, and in the enjoyment of all His privileges. Now this deserves to be especially noted. I do not know if you will agree with me, but to my mind the faults of good people, I do not mean slips and infirmities, but cold, heartless faults, have something specially odious about them. A sin is not so shocking a thing to look at, for all its intrinsic deadliness; and this may be the

reason why, in the Apocalypse, God breaks out with such unusual and vivid language about lukewarmness and tepidity. When the angels asked our Lord as He ascended, What are those wounds in Thy hands? how much is insinuated in His reply, The wounds wherewith I was wounded in the house of My friends! It would be worth while writing a treatise, entitled, On the Sins of Good People; for they are many and various, and have a peculiar malice and hatefulness of their own. Unthankfulness is one of the chief of them. At least, then, bear this in mind while we are talking of thanksgiving. Here is a matter which has to do entirely with good Catholics, with men and women who pray and frequent the sacraments, and form the devout portion of our congregations. If there be any reproach in the matter, it all lies on them. Really, it is almost a comfort to be able to say this. Dry people are ordinarily so self-righteous, that it is, I repeat, a positive comfort to get them up into a corner, and to be able to say to them, Now we have nothing to do with sinners at present: you cannot put the sharp things upon them: you are the guilty people; the reproof is all for you; here is something which, if you do not do, and do well, for God, you are a wretch; wretch, you know, is the very word, the acknowledged epithet for the ungrateful; well! and with all your prayers and sacraments, you do not do it. It is an ugly inference you will have to draw. Yet why not take a good heart, both you and I, and say an honest Confiteor, and arrange with God for a little more grace, and then He shall see how different our future practice is to be? From the particular faults of good people, deliver us, O Lord! There are sacraments for sin, for lukewarmness there are none.

Who does not know, that has ever ministered to souls, how even frequent communion hardens tepid hearts? Have you ever known ten persons plunged in lukewarmness, who were cured? and what was it that cured nine out of the ten? The shame that followed falls into downright sin! Alas! this is a desperate game to play, to expect the prisons of hell to do the work of the medicines of heaven, and stake eternity on the experiment!

The Bible is a revelation of love; but it is not the only one. There is to each one of us a special and personal revelation of Divine Love in the retrospect of that Fatherly Providence which has watched over us through our lives. Who can look back on the long chain of graces of which his life has been composed since the hour of his baptism, without a feeling of surprise at the unweariedness and minuteness of God's love? The way in which things have been arranged for his happiness or his welfare, obstacles disappearing as he drew nigh to them, and, just when they seemed most insurmountable, temptations turning to his good, and what seemed chastisements as he faced them, changing to love when he looked back upon them. Every sorrow has found its place in his life, and he would have been a loser if he had been without it. Chance acquaintances have had their meaning, and done their work; and somehow it seems as if foreseeing love itself could not have woven his web of life differently from what it is, even if it had woven it of love alone. He did not feel it at the time. He did not know God was so much with him: for what more unostentatious than a Father's love? When Jacob made his pillow of the cold stones, and lay down to sleep, where he had his vision of the ladder, he saw nothing

uncommon in the place; but when he awoke out of sleep, he said, "Indeed, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." When Moses desired to see God, the Lord set him in a hole of the rock, and protected him with his right hand while His intolerable glory was passing by, and He said, "I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back; but My Face thou canst not see." This is ever God's way. He is with us, tender, loving, considerate, forgiving. Our hearts burn within us, as did the hearts of the two disciples as they walked and talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus; but it is not until He vanishes from our sight, that we know of a truth that it was our dear Lord Himself.

Thus it is that we can only come to know God by meditation. We must ponder things as Mary did. We must muse and be pensive as Isaac was. We must treasure up God's mercies, and make much of them, and set store by them, as did Jacob and David. Jacob was always looking back on his adventurous life; God was to him the God of Bethel, the God of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac. And what is David's reproach to his people but that they forgot God who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Cham, and terrible things in the Red Sea? The blessings that we know of are more than enough to kindle the most fervent love. And yet we shall never know the half until the day of judgment. Who are we that God should have been thus legislating for us, and laying Himself out to please us? Has He had no world to govern? Has He had no creatures but our own poor selves, or none wiser, holier, lovelier? And yet we tease ourselves about predestination and eternal punish-

ment. We reason harshly about what we cannot alter, and do not understand. I must think this is most unreasonable. For look how the case stands. We know an immense deal about God, yet little or nothing beyond what He has been pleased Himself to reveal to us. Hence when we argue against Him, our arguments are in reality founded, not so much upon what we see, as upon what He has been so good as to tell us about Himself. Now, here we ought to observe, and people for the most part do not observe it, that God has chiefly illuminated for us His mercy and condescension. His severity is not only the dark side of His most dread Majesty, because of its fearfulness, but also because He has told us so little about it. When love is in question, He has been copious, explicit, minute. He explains, He repeats, He gives reasons, He argues, He persuades, He complains, He invites, He allures, He magnifies. Of His rigour He drops but a word now and then. He puts it out as a fact, and leaves it. He startles by an abrupt disclosure, but as He only startled out of love, He is at no pains to explain, to soften, to harmonize. Nay, the most startling expressions about His judgments are rather outbursts from His astonished creatures, Job, Isaias, Peter, or Paul, than revelations from Himself. This very fact is itself a fresh instance of His love. Can we not take the hint which His merciful wisdom vouchsafes to give us by this method of proceeding? As we see but one side of the moon, so we see but one side of God: and what can we know of what we do not see? There is no end to the variety of the disclosures of His goodness, the inventions of His compassion, and the strangeness of His yearning over His own creatures. He has striven to fix our gaze

upon these, but we will not have it so. We are busiest with what He wishes us to think least of. And we neglect to ponder all those numberless signs of our Heavenly Father's love, which are personal things between Him and ourselves; positive and sensible touches of His unutterable affection! Oh, while God is turning every thing to love, and contriving every thing for love, how perversely are we trying to thwart His tenderness and long-suffering! Consider what it is to be blessed by God. Put yourself into the scales, and weigh yourself against Him; and then see what it is to be thought of by Him, to occupy His attention, to try His patience, to call out His love! Truly, the very thought of God is a bed on which we can lie down and rest whenever we choose. The remembrance of His uncontrolled Sovereignty is a joy to us greater than the vision of an angel, brighter than Mary's face, even when it shall smile its "Welcome to Heaven" on our purified and forgiven souls. That He is such a God as He is, is more, far more than rest; it is joy and bliss. That He has loved us with an eternal love, and is our own dearest Father, is joy which has no name. It is heaven begun already upon earth! Is it not then one of the wonders of the world that there should be so little thanksgiving, a greater wonder even than that there should be so little prayer, and almost as great a wonder as that God should love us so unutterably?

A spirit of thanksgiving has been in all ages the characteristic of the Saints. Thanksgiving has been their favourite prayer; and when their love has been grieved because men were unthankful, they have called on the animals, and even on inanimate creatures, to bless God for His goodness. St. Lawrence Justinian

has a beautiful passage on thanksgiving in his Treatise on Obedience:* "Whosoever should try to lay open all God's blessings to the full, would be like a man trying to confine in a little vase the mighty currents of the wide ocean; for that were an easier work than to publish with human eloquence the innumerable gifts of God. Yet though these are unspeakable both from their multitude, their magnitude, and their incomprehensibility, they are by no means to be concealed in silence, or left without commemoration, though it be impossible to commemorate them adequately. They are to be confessed with the mouth, revered in the heart, and religiously worshipped, as far as the littleness of man can do so. For though we cannot explain them in words, we can make acknowledgment of them in the pious and enlarged affection of our hearts. Indeed, the immense Mercy of our Eternal Creator condescends to approve not only what man can do, but what he would desire to do; for the merits of the just are counted up by the Most High, not only in the doing of the work, but in the desire of the will." In one of the revelations of St. Catherine of Siena, God the Father tells her that thanksgiving makes the soul incessantly delight in Him, that it frees men from negligence and lukewarmness altogether, and makes them anxious to please Him more and more in all things. Our Lord gives the increase of thanksgiving as a reason to St. Bridget for the sacrifice of the mass. "My Body," says He, "is daily immolated on the altar, that men may love Me so much the more, and more frequently call to mind My blessings." "Happy is he," says St.

* Cap. 28.

Bernard, "who, at every grace he receives, returns in thought to Him in whom is the fullness of all graces; for if we show ourselves not ungrateful for what He has given us, we may make room for still further graces in ourselves." And in another place he says, "Speak to God in thanksgiving, and you will get graces more and more abundantly." So St. Lawrence Justinian says, "Only let God see you are thankful for what He has given you, and He will bestow more upon you, and better gifts." St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi also received a revelation, in which she was told that thanksgiving prepared the soul for the boundless liberality of the Eternal Word.

Now stop, dear reader, and meditate for a few minutes on the Eternal Word; remember which of the Three Divine Persons He is, the Second Person, the eternally begotten Word of the Father, the splendour of His Majesty, uncreated Wisdom, the same Person who was incarnate and crucified for us, the same who sent us the Holy Ghost, who gave us Mary, who gives us Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, in whose mind revolve at this moment the countless lustres of all possible creations; then think what His liberalities must be—no bound or measure to them. We cannot count their number, nor exhaust their freshness, nor understand their excellence, nor hold their fulness, nor give intelligible human names to their kinds, inventions, varieties, and wonders. Oh that we had more especial devotion to the Person of the Eternal Word, that we would read about Him the wonders the Church can tell us, and then meditate and make acts of love on what we read! This is the true way to increase our devotion to His most dear Humanity, and to learn how to

watch at His crib, to weep over His cross, to worship at His tabernacle, and to nestle in His Sacred Heart. Ask St. Michael, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Athanasius, to get you this devotion; they have a specialty for it; and see how you will run the way of God, when its heat has made a furnace of your heart. And then remember that He Himself has told us, through this revelation to His servant, that thanksgiving prepares the soul for His amazing liberalities. You see you must begin this day and hour quite a new and more royal sort of thanksgiving, than those mere infrequent, formal, respectful civilities, by which you have heretofore been content to acknowledge your accumulated obligations to our dearest Lord. Now, promise Him this, and then with a hotter heart read on.

St. Bonaventure, or rather the author of the meditations on the life of Christ, tells us that our Blessed Lady gave thanks to God without intermission, and lest in common greetings she should be distracted from the praises of God, she used to reply, when any one saluted her, "Thanks be to God!" and from her example several saints have adopted the same practice. Father Didacus Martinez, the Jesuit, who was called the apostle of Peru, because of his zeal for souls, and his indefatigable labours in that province, used to say daily four hundred times, and often six hundred times, "Deo gratias," and he had some beads on purpose to be accurate. He tried to induce others to practise the same devotion, and he declared that he knew there was no short prayer more acceptable to God, if only it be uttered with a devout intention. It is also mentioned of him, in the summary of his Process, that his distinct

acts of divine love often amounted to several thousands in the day.

There was a beautiful tradition among the Jews which Lancisius quotes from Philo. It was to this effect. When God had created the world He asked the angels what they thought of this work of His hands. One of them replied that it was so vast and so perfect, that only one thing was wanting to it, namely, that there should be created a clear, mighty, and harmonious voice, which should fill all the quarters of the world incessantly with its sweet sound, thus day and night to offer thanksgiving to its Maker for His incomparable blessings. Ah! they knew not how much more than that the Blessed Sacrament was one day to be! Thus our thanksgiving should not be an exercise of devotion practised now and then. It should be incessant, the voice of a love which is ever living and fresh in our hearts.

In several of the texts which I have already quoted, St. Paul speaks of prayer with thanksgiving; as if there was to be no prayer of which thanksgiving did not form a part; and this also would illustrate what I said of the spirit of the Eucharist being found in every part and act of Catholic devotion. "I think," says St. Gregory Nyssen, that "if our whole life long we conversed with God without distraction, and did nothing but give thanks, we should really be just as far from adequately thanking our heavenly Benefactor, as if we had never thought of thanking Him at all. For time has three parts, the past, the present, and the future. If you look at the present, it is by God that you are now living; if the future, He is the hope of every thing you expect; if the past, you would never have been if He

had not created you. That you were born, was His blessing. And after you were born, your life and your death were, as the Apostle says, equally His blessing. Whatever your future hopes may be, they hang also upon His blessing. You are only master of the present; and, therefore, if you never once intermitted thanksgiving during your whole life, you would hardly do enough for the grace that is always present; and your imagination cannot concieve of any method possible by which you could do any thing for the time past, or for the time to come."

In addition to these authorities, we must not forget to add the number of thanksgivings which have been indulgenced by the Church, in order that she may the more effectually lead her children to glorify God in this way. We shall have occasion, afterward, to revert to the fact that many of these devotions are thanksgivings to the Most Holy Trinity, for the gifts and graces bestowed upon our Blessed Lady.

It will be a great practical help to us in thanksgiving to classify the different blessings for which we are bound continually to thank God; and I propose that we should in this, as in so many other matters, follow the order and method proposed by Father Lancisius :—

1. First of all, we should thank God for the blessings which are common to the whole human race. St. Chrysostom is very strong upon this point ; and our Lord called the practice of thanksgiving for these blessings the necklace of His spouse ; for, after He had been pleased to espouse St. Bridget, and was instructing her how she should spiritually adorn herself, He said, "The Spouse ought to have the signs of her Bridegroom upon her breast ; that is, the memory of the fa-

vours I have shown thee, namely, how nobly I have created thee, giving thee both a body and a soul, how nobly I have endowed thee with health and temporal blessings, how sweetly I have brought thee back from thy wanderings, by dying for thee, and, if thou wilt have it, restoring to thee thine inheritance." Orlandini mentions this as one of the characteristics of Father Peter Faber. He was always gratefully mindful, not only of God's private blessings, but of those common to all mankind. He never forgot that thanks were due to the divine liberality, not less for these common blessings, than for special ones; and it was a source of grief to him that men generally paid no attention to them, but took them as matters of course. He mourned because men rarely blessed that sweet will and boundless charity of God, by which He had first created the world, and then redeemed it, and after that, prepared for us eternal glory, and that in all this He had vouchsafed to think specially and distinctly of each one of us. Under this head of common blessings must be reckoned all the graces of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, the glorious privileges of the Mother of God, and all the splendour of the angels and the saints. Among other promises which God made to St. Gertrude, this was one: "Whenever any one devoutly praises God, and gives Him thanks for the blessings conferred upon Gertrude, the Almighty mercifully wills to enrich him with as many spiritual graces as he offers thanksgivings, if not at the present time, at least on some fitting occasion." And thus Orlandini tells us that Peter Faber used to be continually congratulating the angels and the blessed on their gifts, assiduously pondering the particular graces God had given them, and then

separately, for each of them, naming those he could, with great emotion he gave God thanks for them on their behalf. He reckoned that this was in the highest degree delightful to those inhabitants of heaven, as well as immeasurably profitable to ourselves, as in heaven the blessed see how the debt of gratitude they owe to God is simply oppressive, and never can be paid. He practised this devotion, until at last he came to feel as if there was not a single token of the Divine Goodness shown to any one, for which he was not personally a debtor. He made himself a kind of vicar for every one who had any sort of happiness or success, and no sooner did he perceive it, than he set to work to bless God, and to give thanks. There was nothing joyous, nothing prosperous, that he saw or heard of, but he at once became its voice of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. Nay, fair cities, fruitful fields, beautiful olive-grounds, delightful vineyards,—he looked round upon them with exulting eye, and because they could not speak for themselves, he spoke for them, and thanked the Lord of all for their beauty, and in the name of their owners and possessors, for the dominion which He had given them thereof. How wonderful must have been the interior of this holy father's soul, decked with such various and surpassing gifts, enriched with such very peculiar, and, so to speak, private graces, and, above all, with a dower of *interior dispositions*, which was his special characteristic treasure, and wherein hardly any canonized saint seems to surpass him. No wonder St. Francis Xavier added him to the litany of the saints, or that St. Francis of Sales speaks of his joy and consolation at consecrating an altar in the good father's native village in Savoy. Yet, like Balthazar

Alvarez, whom St. Theresa saw in a vision, higher in glory than all his contemporaries, though there were many canonized among them, so Peter Faber is not raised upon the altars of the Church, but rests in God's bosom as one of His hidden saints. Blessed be the Most Holy Trinity for every gift and grace that ever beautified his soul! And for all the treasures of grace which God has given to His Saints, and now keeps hidden in Himself, so that we cannot glorify Him for them!

2. The second class of the divine mercies, for which we are bound to offer continual thanksgivings, is obviously the multitude of personal blessings which we have received from the unmerited goodness of God. How beautifully St. Bernard expresses this in his first sermon on the Canticles. In the wars and conflicts, says he, which at no hour are wanting to those who live devoutly in Christ, whether from the flesh, the world, or the devil, for man's life is a warfare on the earth, as you have all experienced in yourselves—in all these conflicts we must daily renew our songs of gratitude for the victories already obtained. As often as a temptation is overcome, or a vice subdued, or an imminent danger avoided, or a snare of the evil one discovered in time, or an inveterate passion of the soul healed, or a virtue long coveted and prayed for, at length by the gift of God granted to us, what must we do, but, according to the Prophet, utter the voice of praise and thanksgiving, and bless God at each single blessing for all His gifts? Else, when the last day comes, he will be reckoned among the ungrateful, who cannot say, Thy justifications were the subject of my song in the place of my pilgrimage.* Nay, at every advance we

* Ps. cxviii. 54.

make, according to the ascensions which each has disposed in his heart, so many separate songs must we sing to the praise and glory of Him who has thus promoted us. Father Lancisius* says, "I would urge all who serve God fervently and faithfully, to return Him thanks with peculiar affection and zealous gratitude, at least four times in the day, for all the personal blessings He has been pleased to confer upon us; first, in the morning at meditation, secondly, in the middle of the day, or before dinner, thirdly, in the examen of conscience, and fourthly, at bed time. And the first rank among these personal blessings should be held by the grace which has called us either from heresy to the Catholic faith, or from neglecting the sacraments to a good life, or from relapses into sin to a real conversion. Our Lord said once to St. Bridget, "The Bride should be ready, with fair and clean adornments, when the Bridegroom comes to the nuptials, and then are your ornaments clean when you think with gratitude about your sins, how I cleansed you in baptism from the sin of Adam, and how, when you fell, I have so often borne with you, and when else you would have fallen, have held you up."

Among our personal blessings we must thank God for the continuance of health and life, whereby we can daily amass huge treasures of merits, and glorify the dear majesty of God by numerous acts of love. We must thank Him also for past and present humiliations, for calumnies, unkind interpretations of our words, deeds, omissions, or intentions, the detractions we have suffered from, and every thing which has ever happened

* ii. 35.

to mortify our self-love. For if we consider the true interests of our soul, it is a real blessing to be humbled and kept down, not only because it helps us to advance in the way of perfection, but also because of the innumerable opportunities it gives us of glorifying God and acquiring merit, and of being so much higher in heaven. Indeed, there is hardly any thing by which we can glorify God more effectually than by the exercise of virtues while we are under humiliations. So, if we are in a condition or state of life in which we do not attract the notice or the praise of men, we ought to thank God most warmly for it, considering the danger there would be to our souls in a more elevated and honourable state. The patience and long-suffering of God should be another subject of continual thanksgiving. Is it not wonderful how He has borne with us, and we so miserably perverse the while? How many absolutions have we not had, our lost merits restored to us, fresh graces given us! What a miracle of patience God has been! Can we not well enter into the spirit of that Spanish lady of whom Father Rho speaks, who said, "That if she had to build a Church in honour of the attributes of God, she would dedicate it to the Divine Patience?" How beautiful her soul must have been, and how many deep and intimate things must have passed between her and God!

Again, how many sins have we been in the way of committing, or near to committing, and by grace have not done so? And how many temptations have proved fatal to others, which never so much as came in our way? Even the heathen Emperor Antoninus thanked God for the occasions of sin to which he had never been

exposed. This then is another personal blessing for which we must always be giving thanks. Again, there are three blessings which a Catholic ought to remember at every time; the Divine Election which made him a Catholic, and not a Jew, Mohammedan, or heretic; the Divine Providence which has been his shield and buckler ever since he was born; and the Divine Liberality which has loaded him with such a profusion of gifts and graces, not absolutely necessary for his salvation, but either to adorn his soul, or to increase his joy in Christ.

St. Chrysostom, also, would have us remember with special gratitude the hidden and unknown blessings which God has heaped upon us. God, he says, is an overrunning fountain of clemency, flowing upon us, and round about us, even when we know it not. Orlandini tells us that in this matter also Father Peter Faber was remarkable. He used to say there were hardly any blessings we ought more scrupulously to thank God for, than those we never asked, and those which come to us without our knowing it. It is not unlikely, in the case of many of us, that these hidden blessings may turn out at the last day to have been the very hinges on which our lives turned, and that, through them, our predestination has been worked out, and our eternal rest secured.

3. Neither must we think that too much is being asked of us, when spiritual writers tell us we ought to return thanks to God for afflictions and tribulations, both those which are passed and those which we may be suffering from at the present time. This is of course not the place to enter into the uses and merciful purposes of affliction. But they will readily suggest them-

selves to every one. John of Avila used to say that one Deo gratias in adversity was worth six thousand in prosperity. But we must again refer to Orlandini in his description of the special gift of thanksgiving which Peter Faber possessed. He thought it was not enough that men should humble themselves under the hand of God in the time of public calamities, but that they should give God hearty thanks for them, for famine and scarcity, for wars, floods, pestilences, and all the other scourges of heaven; and it was a subject of "vehement" sorrow to him that men did not openly acknowledge God's merciful intentions in these things. When he grieved over the misfortunes of others, what stirred his sorrow most was, that men did not see how much of gentleness there was in the visitation; for that is not perfect gratitude which is fed by favours only. "Nay, we cannot tell," says St. Antiochus, "who is really grateful, till we see whether he gives God hearty and sincere thanks in the midst of calamities;" and St. Chrysostom, in his Homilies on the epistle to the Ephesians, says, we ought to thank God for hell itself, and for all the pains and punishments that are there, because they are such an effectual bridle to our inordinate passions.

4. It is also a very important devotion to thank God for what we call trifling blessings. Not of course that any goodness of God is trifling to such as we are; but mercies may be little by comparison. St. Bernard applies to this devotion our Lord's injunction to His disciples to gather up the fragments that nothing be lost. In the Life of the Blessed Battista Varani, a Franciscaness, we read that our dear Lord once said to her, "If you were never to sin again, and if you

alone were to do more penances than all the Blessed in heaven have ever done, and if you were to shed as many tears as would fill all the seas, and suffer as many pains as you are capable of suffering,—all that would not be enough to thank Me for the very least blessing I have ever bestowed upon you." Another time, Battista said God had given her to understand that the glorious Mother of God, and all men and angels with their perfections, could not adequately thank the Divine Love for the creation of one the least field-flower on the earth, which He has made for our use, in respect of the infinite gulf there is between His excellence and our vileness. Orlandini tells us that Peter Faber excelled in this devotion also; and that he used to say, that in every gift of God, no matter how trifling, three things were to be considered, the giver, the gift, and the affection with which it was given; and that if we pondered these three points, we should see that there could be no such things as little mercies. And doubtless this was the reason, says the biographer, why that blessed mind was always overflowing with the abundance of divine gifts. For, as God is an inexhaustible ocean of goodness, the fountain of His liberality cannot be dried up where He meets with a considerate and thankful mind into which He can pour Himself. So Thomas à Kempis observes, that if we look at the dignity of the Giver, no gift is small which comes from God. Our Lord taught St. Gertrude even to give thanks for future blessings not yet received. So acceptable is thanksgiving before God!

5. St. Ignatius used to say that there were very few, perhaps not one person in the world, who thoroughly understood what an impediment we are to God wishing

to work great things in our souls; for it is hardly credible what God would do, if we would only let Him. Hence holy people have made a special devotion of thanking the Divine Majesty for all the blessings He would in His munificence have conferred upon them, if they themselves had not hindered Him. Others, again, have been touched with sensible gratitude for blessings for which they were not thankful at the time they received them. Peter Faber used to say masses, or get them said, in expiation of his own and others' ungrateful inconsiderateness when receiving blessings from God; and whenever he saw a rich or fortunate man, he used to make acts of reparation for his possible forgetfulness of his Divine Benefactor. Others have felt strongly about blessings, for which they thanked God at the time, but it now seems to them, not so much as they might have done, nor so affectionately. St. Lawrence Justinian tells us that this feeling enters into the thanksgivings of the Blessed in heaven. Then there are blessings which we have abused or made light of; and St. Bernard tells us these should certainly be made the subject of special thanksgiving. Others, again, have exercised devotion in thanking God for blessings which others were preparing for them, or which were growing, or which happened while they themselves were asleep. This at least shows the ingenious love of grateful hearts. But there is another practice recorded by Orlandini of Peter Faber, which must by no means be omitted. It is well worthy the imitation of all of us. It is to give God special thanks for preventing innumerable of our words and deeds from giving scandal, when in themselves they are

calculated to do so. What can be a sweeter mercy than this?

6. Another practice of holy men has been to thank God in behalf of the irrational creatures, a devotion most acceptable to Him as the wise Creator of the world; and it has also the further advantage of being a most excellent practice of the Presence of God, enabling us everywhere, and at all times, to rise to Him by means of His creatures. But we must not in this think so much of the dominion or use which God has given us out of His bounty over these creatures, as of the love which He had toward us in creating them, as He Himself said to St. Catherine of Siena: "The soul which has arrived at the state of perfect love, when it receives gifts and graces from Me, does not look so much at My gift, as at the affection of charity which moved Me to confer the gift upon it."

7. We shall also glorify God by thanking Him for all the blessings conferred upon our enemies. This devotion will be the more acceptable to Him because it is a great exercise of brotherly love; for it is impossible to practise it long without all coldness and uncomfortable feeling giving way to gentleness and tenderness, even toward those who have wronged us most, or who show the greatest dislike of us. But, as my chief aim in this treatise is nothing but to accumulate an abundance of affectionate contrivances to get our dearest Lord a little more glory, as it is the wrongs of God, the injured interests of Jesus, in behalf of which I want to move my readers, there are some other methods of thanksgiving which are very much to my purpose. Look at the lost souls! There is not one whom God has not loaded with blessings, and pursued

with tenderest graces, and striven to win with the divine caresses of His Holy Spirit. And there are no thanks there. Justice has its harvest there, but not love. Hence it is that De Ponte, in the Preface to his Meditations, recommends to us the practice of thanking God for all the blessings of nature and grace which have been bestowed on those who have lost themselves by their own wilfulness. Nay, there have been some so jealous of God's glory, so afraid that some nook of His creation would not thank Him for His goodness, that they have loved to praise Him because even the lost are for His love's sake punished *citra condignum*, less than they deserved. How prodigal has God been of His goodness! Could figures tell the number of His gifts to the multitude of the reprobate? Then add the Jews, infidels, and heretics now on earth, who leave Him without thanksgiving! and bad Catholics living in mortal sin and trampling the sacraments beneath their feet, crucifying our dearest Lord afresh, and putting Him to an open shame! Blessed be God for every one of the gifts of every one of these! May the Blessed Sacrament praise Him this hour for them all in every tabernacle throughout the world; for sweeter, oh a thousand times! is the cry of that Mystical Life of Jesus than could have been the strong, clear, ubiquitous and musical voice which the Jewish tradition dreamed angelic love had craved.

If you ask for a practice for this, take the scheme of the French Apostolate of Prayer. The prayer will be none the less prayer because you turn it into thanksgiving. Nay, it will be all the more availing. On Sunday, invoking the Most Holy Trinity, return thanks for the Church, the Pope, the priesthood, and

all her members in a state of grace. On Monday, in union with all the saints, thank God for all He has done, is doing, and graciously purposes to do for the needs of catholicity in Europe. On Tuesday, call on the Holy Angels to join you in thanking the Divine Majesty for all His mercies to the thirty-six millions of savages and negroes. On Wednesday, invoke St. Joseph, and with him thank God for all the love He has lavished on the three hundred and forty-five millions of unbelievers in Eastern Asia. On Thursday, unite yourself with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to supply for the ingratitude of the two hundred and twenty millions of infidels in Western Asia. On Friday, shelter yourself in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and spurred by the memory of His dear Passion, supply for the ingratitude of the hundred and twenty millions of heretics and schismatics. On Saturday, offer to God the Immaculate Heart of our sweet Mother for all the sinners of the world, in return for the numberless benefits He has bestowed upon them. Oh that God might have a little more glory, were it ever so little! Oh that the number of hearts might daily increase which should love Jesus more, and should mourn that He is loved so little! What is life, what is death, if God only be loved, and be loved more, and more, and more? Sweet Jesus! when shall we burn? When shall we burn? Where is the fire Thou camest on earth to kindle? Why is it not kindled in our hearts? Dearest Lord! if we love Thee so little, we can at least hate ourselves that we do not love Thee more!

8. Another practice of thanksgiving, and one which leads us to the confines of the next chapter, on Praise and Desire, is to thank our Blessed Lord, with the

utmost fervour and simplicity of joy, for the immense multitude of angels and saints who fill the choirs of heaven, adoring Him as their Head, and thanking Him as the author of all grace and the giver of all gifts. For, if we sincerely love Him, it is our chief sorrow that we cannot love Him worthily, and, therefore, it is really a blessing bestowed upon ourselves that He should have been pleased to create creatures who can love Him so much more, so unspeakably more, than we do. To this some have added thanksgivings for all the worship and adoration He is receiving at this moment throughout the earth, and in purgatory, all the sacrifices that are being offered, all the prayers that are being made in churches, the vows by which fervent men are binding themselves, and all the increases of Divine Love which are going on in the hearts of those who are in a state of grace. Others again have been drawn to continual thanksgiving to Jesus for the glorious mysteries of His life, as contrasted with the joyful and the sorrowful, thanking Him for them daily, for the glory He Himself had in them, and for the glory they gave His Father, as well as the benefits which we derive from them. Thus those who have had a special devotion to our Lord's Resurrection have almost always coupled it with an equally special attraction to thanksgiving.

9. Others have been distinguished by a deep and life-long feeling of gratitude for the gift of faith, and for all the supernatural wonders of our holy religion. These form two very distinct sources of devotion. By the latter, to speak of that first, men are led to rejoice in the absolute sovereignty of God and the unlimited supremacy of His most dear Majesty, and in their own

vileness and nothingness. They are drawn, like Peter Consolini, to the views of grace which make least of man's freedom and most of God's election. They think they can never thank God sufficiently that they are so completely and helplessly in His hands. They would not for the world have it otherwise. They can hardly understand those who do not feel as they do. They bless God for His promises, but their habit of mind is to trust rather to His love. They do not care about merit. What they care about is His glory. "I cannot bear this talking about merit," said St. Francis of Sales: though it does not follow that everybody else has a right to say what he said. In low-spirits it is the thought of God's sovereignty, rather than of His faithfulness, which is the bed of their repose. These are the persons who are always so happy in religion, except when God withdraws for awhile this blessed confidence, for their greater sanctification; and even then, their language is that of Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Men with this attraction seem to have a special gift of unselfishness and unworldliness. They delight in the spiritual plans and successes of other men, or of religious orders which are rivals to their own. It is a joy to them that all the arrangements about merit, satisfaction, remission, infused habits, and indulgences, are so thoroughly supernatural. They have a profound reverence for all the benedictions of the Church, for her sacramentals, forms, and manipulations, and for the rubrics of her ceremonies, which seem to be rather gleams of heaven than the marshalling of earthly pomps. They glory in the principles of the Gospel and the vitality of the Church being opposed to all

the calculations and principles of the world. They revel in the strength of weakness, in the exaltation of holy poverty, in the splendour of abasement, in the almightiness of suffering, in the victory of defeat. These things are to them like the odours of the spice islands wafted out to the weary navigator. They are fragrant of heaven and of God. It is a peculiar delight to them that men are converted by unaccountable grace rather than by controversy, and that God so often seems to take matters into His own hands, and to work of Himself, without making use of us. They have no heartaching difficulties about God and nature, because they do not look upon men, as Bridgewater treatises and such like things teach, as the centre of the system, or the reason of creation, or the mark God worked to. They think this would narrow their spiritual views as much as believing the earth to be the centre of the solar system, or the solar system the centre of the universe, would narrow a man's views of nature. They look on Jesus as the centre of all things, as the reason of creation, as the mark God worked to, as He vouchsafes to speak of Himself as working, who is self-sufficient bliss and rest. The predestination of Jesus, in their view, explains every thing, harmonizes every thing, controls every thing, is the fountain of every thing which lies outside the Unity of the Most Holy Trinity; and Mary's predestination is part of His. They are only here in His train, and they have no consequence or importance except the one dear dignity of being loved by Him. As the little stars go out when the great sun shines, so faith's hard facts, the permission of evil, and the eternity of punishment, these

men cannot see because of the blessed and exhilarating dazzle of the Predestination of Jesus.

The practice of thanksgiving for the gift of faith is one which cannot be too strongly recommended in our own time and country. It was the devotion of that most beautiful soul, St. Jane Frances de Chantal; and I quote from her life at length with the less scruple, because of all the varieties of the spiritual life, of all the manifestations of the Spirit of holiness, none seem so fitted to ourselves as the sweet and gentle spirit of the Visitation. It is, perhaps, natural I should say this, because of its connection with the Oratory. When St. Francis of Sales was in Rome as a young man, he was much at the Oratory, and he called its rule "a wonderful mode of life." One of his bosom friends was our Venerable Juvenal Ancina, in the process of whose canonization St. Francis was a witness. When he wished to consolidate his work of conversion in the Chablais, he established an Oratory of St. Philip at Thonon, with seven Fathers, and was himself the Father Superior. Hence the Holy See has allowed some of our Congregations to keep his feast, as a saint of the Order. The Rule of the Visitation has several striking points of resemblance to St. Philip's Rule. The title-page of the Venetian edition of his works runs, "The Spiritual Works of St. Francis of Sales, Father Superior of the Oratory of Thonon, and Founder of the Visitation of St. Mary;" and the translation of Charles Augustus de Sales' Life of the Venerable M. Blonay, published at Naples in 1694, professes on the title-page to be "By one covetous of the spirit of SS. Francis of Sales and Philip Neri." But to return to St. Jane Frances.

We read of her as follows:* "When, after her marriage she went to reside in the country, and on becoming a widow, she ordered those of her servants who had the best voices, to learn the chant of the Credo, to assist in singing it more solemnly at the parochial mass, in which she took very great pleasure; and afterward, when a religious, she occasionally sang it at recreation. She paid a special devotion to the holy martyrs, because they had shed their blood for the faith, and to the saints of the first ages, because they had defended that holy faith by their writings and their labours, so that it became quite a proverb among her nuns on the festivals of these great saints of the first centuries, to say, 'It is one of our mother's saints!' She was not satisfied with hearing these lives read in the refectory, and speaking of them at recreation; but she had the book occasionally taken to her room, to read it again in private, and in the latter years of her life she purchased the Lives of the Saints in two volumes, and marked the lives of those great saints and first followers of the Church, which she read with great devotion. She had an especial devotion to St. Spiridion, who had captivated the reason of a subtle philosopher with the creed. She knew the hymn of St. Thomas by heart, 'Adoro Te devote,' and often recited it. She taught it to some of the sisters, and told them that she always repeated the following verse two or three times:

'Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius.'
I believe all the Son of God has spoken.

At the commencement of her widowhood, so thoroughly did she abandon herself to her devotion, that she had

* Life, vol. ii. p. 6, Orat. Edit.

no greater pleasure than in convincing her understanding with the following words: 'I see the juice of the grape, and I believe it to be the Blood of the Lamb of God. I taste bread and believe it to be the true Flesh of my Saviour.' But when she placed herself under the guidance of St. Francis, he taught her to simplify her belief, and to recite fervent and short acts of faith, thus showing her that the most simple and the most humble faith is also the most loving and most solid. She daily repeated at the end of the Gospel of the Mass, the Credo and the Confiteor; and one day, while exhorting her nuns to do likewise, she exclaimed, 'O God! what need have we to humble ourselves, inasmuch as we are not deemed worthy to confess our creed before all the tyrants of the earth!'" Just as St. Philip rose up in agitation one night in the Oratory, fearing lest what the preacher of the evening had said should give his hearers a favourable idea of the Institute, and cried out, "There is no need to boast: we are nothing; no one of the Congregation has shed his blood for the faith yet." St. Jane Frances had also certain sentences written on the walls of the cell, which was afterward made the novitiate; and she wrote on the wall beneath the crucifix the following verse from the Canticles, "I sat down under the shadow of my Well-Beloved, and His fruit was sweet to my palate." A sister begged her to say why she put the sentence in that place: "In order," she replied, "to be often making naked and simple acts of faith; for the faith, though a light in itself, is a shadow to the human reason; and I wish my reason to sit down in repose under the shadow of the faith which makes one believe that He who was placed on that

cross with so much contempt, is the true Son of God." Another time she said that she had always the intention, when looking at the crucifix, that her mere look should be an act of faith similar to that of the centurion, who, striking his breast, said, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

She told a person in confidence, that while she was yet in the world, God had given her great light on the purity of faith, and showed her that the perfection of our understanding in this life, is its captivity and subjection to obscure matters of faith, and that the understanding would be enlightened in proportion as it should be humbly submissive to these obscurities, and that she always *hated those sermons* which attempted to prove by natural reason the mystery of the holy and adorable Trinity, and other articles of our faith; and that the faithful soul must seek no other reason than that sole sovereign universal reason, namely, that God has revealed these things, as far as was needful, to His Church. She never cared to hear of miracles in confirmation of the faith, nor revelations, and occasionally she made them pass them over while they were reading in the refectory the Lives of the Saints, or sermons on the festivals and mysteries of our Lord and our Lady. She resembled in this the great St. Louis of France, who, once when he was called into his private chapel to see some miraculous appearance which had taken place at Mass, refused to go, saying, that he thanked God he believed in the Blessed Sacrament, and should not believe it more firmly for all the miracles in the world, neither did he wish to see one, lest he should thereby forfeit our Lord's special blessing on those who have not seen, and yet have believed. She

occasionally said to her nuns, "What have we to do with proofs, miracles, and revelations, unless it be to bless God who has provided them for some who have need thereof? God has revealed to us all that is necessary through His Church."

When she composed the meditations for the retreats, extracted from the writings of St. Francis, she wished to have one on the incomparable grace we have of being children of holy Church. She had it written on a separate sheet of paper, and told her nuns that she had not got beyond this meditation during the whole of the two first days of her retreat. She read Holy Scripture by the order of her superiors; but among all the books of this sacred volume, the Acts of the Apostles was her favourite; and it is impossible to say how often she read and re-read it. She related to her community its contents with fresh fervour; and it seemed that each time she spoke of this primitive Church, she told them something which they had never heard before. When she heard that her son had been killed in fighting against the English in the Isle of Rhé, she knelt down with clasped hands, and her eyes lifted up to heaven, and said, "Allow me, my Lord and my God! allow me to speak, to give vent to my grief; and what shall I say, O my God, unless it be to thank Thee for the honour thou has done me in taking my only son while he was fighting for the Church of Rome." She then took up a crucifix which she kissed, and said, "I receive this blow, my Redeemer! with all submission, and beseech Thee to receive this child into the arms of Thy Divine Mercy." After this she thus addressed the deceased: "O my dear son! how happy art thou in having sealed with thy blood the

fidelity which thy ancestors had ever had for the Church of Rome; in this I esteem myself happy, and return thanks to God for having been thy mother."

10. But there is one practice of thanksgiving which must enter into all others and be joined to them, thanksgiving, if it might be so, of tears rather than of words; gratitude for the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, and the Personal Presence of Jesus with His Church. It is not only the inestimable blessings of the Sacrifice which must call out these incessant thanksgivings, neither is it the unspeakable love and condescension involved in it. But it is the joy that now at least thanks are offered to God which are equal to Himself. We need no longer sit by the waysides of the world, downcast and weeping, because His Blessed Majesty is not worshipped and praised and thanked, as it ought to be. One mass is infinite praise, and there are masses nearly every moment of day and night on this side the world and at our antipodes. There is the Blessed Sacrament in crowded or neglected churches all the earth over; and wheresoever He is, there is infinite praise, unspeakable worship, unfathomable thanksgiving! And the especial function of the Holy Mass is Eucharist, the worship of thanksgiving! Nay, even the mere creature by means of the Blessed Sacrament can attain himself to a higher act of worship than he could ever else have dreamed of; for the creature can pay no higher homage to his Creator than by receiving Him in the overwhelming reality of the Blessed Sacrament. What repose there is in the thought of all this! How many inward complainings can we hush by it! How much unhumble disquietude with our own littleness, our own vile attainments, our own

impossibilities of loving God as we feel we ought to love Him! Ah blessed Jesus! He is all things to us. Whatever we want, it comes to us in the shape of Him, in the strangest of places, and the most unaccountable of ways! Shall we not say then that we love God worthily and worship Him abundantly, for Jesus is our love and our worship too? How happy with an abounding, inexhaustible happiness, this makes us! And it is so much sweeter to owe every thing to Jesus, than to have it of ourselves, even if that were possible! There is no pleasure on this side the grave equal to the feeling of the multiplication and reduplication of our obligations to our dear Lord. The more we run into His debt, the more joy it is; the more inextricable our obligations, the more light-hearted is our liberty; the knowledge that to all eternity we shall be just as far off from satisfying His love, just in the same impossibility of paying what we owe, is itself the joy of joys. And meanwhile, thanks, a thousand times thanks, to Jesus! God gets His praise, His worship, and His thanks, deep, beautiful, infinite as Himself.

Now this perhaps will enable us to judge how far we are truly grateful to our Blessed Lord, and how far we have really discharged the duty of thanksgiving. Whatever may be thought of particular methods of this devotion, practised by the saints or suggested by spiritual writers, the whole Church is agreed on the duty and fitness of a special thanksgiving after Holy Communion. If ever there is a time for thanks too deep for words, it is when the Creator has been pleased to overwhelm His creature with this stupendous gift of Himself, and when He is actually within us. Hence it is that spiritual writers tell us, for a while at least,

not to open a book, but to commune with Jesus in our own hearts. We must surely have something to say to Him then, or at least He will say something to us in the deep silence of our hearts, if only we will listen. Yet how stands the case in reality? Why, if we may take the fervour and regularity with which we make our thanksgiving after communion, as an index of our love of Jesus, nothing can well be more disheartening. To must of us there is hardly a quarter of an hour in our lives, more tedious, idle, aimless, unsatisfactory, than what we call our thanksgiving. We have nothing to say. Our hearts do not run over. We never can receive a greater gift in this world. Each communion, it grows more wonderful; so much does our lukewarmness and ingratitude make the continuance of His love a stranger marvel. He has come who is to be our joy for all eternity; and we have nothing to say to Him. We tire of His company. It is a relief to us when we may believe that He has gone. We have been civil to Him. We have asked His blessing as our superior. But it has been little more than civility: at the most, it was only respect. Alas! alas! it is useless to ask men to adopt various practices of thanksgiving, when our Lord's own visit can hardly force one upon them. It is as if thanksgiving had but one fixed home left on earth, and that its tenure even of that was continually becoming more and more precarious. However, it will be something if these bad, lazy, listless thanksgivings bring home to us how very, very little in reality we care for Jesus; and that if we could only have His grace without Himself, it would be just the religion to our mind. Ah! dearest Lord! and knowing all this, Thou abidest in the tabernacle!

But you will say, "It is hard to leave us in this way with a few ill-humoured words. If our thanksgivings are so bad, perhaps we might try to make them better, if we had any hints given us how to do so." Well! let us see what our good books can tell us.

I suppose there are few difficulties more universally felt than that of making a good thanksgiving after communion. Spiritual writers, as I just now said, tell us we ought not to use books, at least not for some little time afterward. They assure us that if grace has any special and critical moments in life, they are passing while Jesus remains in our hearts by His sacramental presence. St. Alphonso and others have left it on record, that one communion rightly made is enough to fit a man for canonization, and that the thanksgiving is the time when the soul appropriates to itself the abundance of grace, and drink deepest of the fountains of light and life. St. Philip's advice was full of his usual gentle wisdom. He recommends that if we have made our meditation before Mass, we should not cast about for new thoughts after communion, but take up some train of thought which we had found came with unction to us in our meditation. This will prevent a great deal of time being lost in our thanksgiving, from our being at sea for want of a subject, and from having so many things to say to our Lord that we do not know what to say first. It is of a piece with our Saint's quiet ways in spiritual things. He would have us so familiar with our Lord, that any unusual or busy reception of Him would rather bespeak the less perfect activity of Martha than the repose and union of Mary. The same spirit made him wish that the fathers of his Congregation should not have a fixed

hour for Mass, but should go at once when the sacristan called them.

But many persons living in the world are not able to make any regular meditation before communion, and many also practise mental prayer in a different way, spending their time in what is called Affective Prayer, with their will rather than their understanding, and such are sometimes puzzled to find thoughts which they can resume from their prayer, when they have received communion. Others again, particularly those who have a very special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and yet cannot boast of an habitual union with God, find St. Philip's recommendation unsuited to them, and must think more immediately of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Presence of Jesus within them at that moment. Under these circumstances, and considering at once the difficulty and the importance of making a good thanksgiving after communion, I shall not seem tedious if I furnish my readers with materials for this purpose. I will present them with an analysis of the method of thanksgiving recommended by Father Lancisius, and repeated by him in two different treatises. I must not be understood to recommend it to any one as he gives it. It is far too long and minute, and I believe would in most cases smother devotion by the multiplicity of acts which it involves. The heart must have freer play, and the whole exercise be much more simplified. I give it therefore to furnish materials, to serve as a sort of mine out of which persons with different tastes, or the same persons at different times may supply themselves with food either for reflection or aspiration: as many of the thoughts are both deep and beautiful.

1. The acts which Father Lancisius suggested should follow immediately after communion, are those of humiliation. We are to humble ourselves profoundly before God for the coming of so great a Lord, recalling 1. the sins of our past lives, 2. our present imperfections and tepidity, 3. the vileness of our nature compared with the Divinity of Christ, and 4. our Blessed Lord's perfections both as God and man.

2. Then follow acts of adoration. We are to adore, 1. the Most Holy Trinity in the Blessed Eucharist, 2. the Sacred Humanity of Jesus existing within ourselves at that time. 3. The same as existing in so many places in the Church, wherever the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, rejoicing over His worship and honour where the faithful are ever crowding to Him, and mourning over His dishonour wheresoever He lies without due devotion being paid to Him, or where He is perhaps actually blasphemed. 4. We are to adore with a special adoration the Soul of Christ as filled with all the ornaments of sanctity, with all merits, and with so ancient, constant, and fruitful a love of ourselves. 5. The Body of Christ as having suffered so many and such bitter and unworthy things on our account, and as at length slain for us, and we must imprint spiritual kisses on those parts of His Body, which, for our sakes, were the most tormented with wounds and agony.

3. We must give thanks also from the bottom of our hearts, 1. for His coming to us in this communion, 2. for His coming in the Incarnation, 3. for all the merits and examples of virtue during His life, which He left for our good, 4. for the institution of this most Holy Sacrament, and all the other Sacraments, 5. for His death and our redemption, 6. if we are priests, for His

having raised us to the priesthood, 7. for the blessing of creation, 8. for our preservation, 9. for the gift of faith, 10. for our justification, 11. if we be religious, for our vocation, 12. for our perseverance in a state of grace or in a holy calling, 13. for His patience in bearing with our sins and imperfections, and those of others, 14. for the holiness He has granted to so many saints, 15. for the trials and tribulations which we have at any time had to undergo, 16. for His assiduous care in leading us along the way of perfection, 17. for all the peculiar individual blessings which we have received from Him, and of which everybody has some to thank Him for, 18. for all the blessings He has conferred on us through others, 19. for all the blessings, general and particular, which God ever has granted, or ever will grant to any creature, especially those which He gave to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, to His Blessed Mother, and the rest of the Saints and elect, 20. for the institution of the Order, Congregation, or Confraternity to which we belong, 21. for its propagation, 22. for the persecutions it has to endure, which strengthen and purify it, 23. for all the Saints and learned men it has produced, 24. for all who have had such sweet and wonderful vocations to it, 25. for all the fruit it has brought forth throughout the world, 26. for all the good friends and benefactors who love it so much, 27. for all its adversaries and persecutors who give it so many opportunities of meriting.

4. Next comes oblation. Offer to the Most Holy Trinity the Blessed Sacrament, which you have received, for all the joy, honour, and complacency which the Divine Majesty receives therefrom, because of all the blessings it confers on you and others; offer it for

your sins and necessities, and those of others, and of your friends and enemies, living or dead. Offer to our dear Lord whom you have received, in union with His merits and holy limbs, 1. your soul and body, with all your faculties, limbs, senses, actions, and rest, desiring only the sanctification of every thing about you, that you may be a sort of perpetual holocaust, burning to the delight and honour of the Divine Majesty, consuming yourself, and reducing yourself to nothing, purely for God; 2. your will to die, and endure any thing, rather than offend Him again by any deliberate sin, whether mortal or venial; 3. your purpose always to choose the most perfect things, and among them those rather which are most repugnant to your senses, judgment, will, and honour, because you hope thus to gain God most glory, as well as become more like Jesus Crucified; 4. your resolution to persevere in the observance of the commandments and counsels of God, and of your rules, and in a perfect life, however full it may be of tribulations; 5, your willingness to suffer for Christ heavy things, which those around you will esteem light, and so you will gain no credit for them; 6. your determination to seek no other end but God alone in all your actions; and 7. your burning desire to convert all men to His pure love, and your pining for this sweet conversion.

5. The next place is to be occupied by petition. Ask fervently of Christ, 1. the remission of your sins, both as to the guilt and punishment of them; 2. perseverance in His grace and holy living; 3. if the Holy Spirit so inspires you, and you have your director's leave, ask for sufferings, sharp, frequent, various, personal, little esteemed or sympathized with by others,

hidden, without cause on your part, and without sin either of your own, or of those who afflict you; 4, ask for a continual augmentation of humility, poverty, chastity, obedience, faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, patience, devotion, prayer, discerning of spirits, mortification of the passions, the greatest purity of heart and intention, and all the rest of the virtues. Ask to have a heart free from all actions either formally or materially bad, unmeritorious or tepid, from all vicious habits, inordinate movements of the passions, and from all debt of temporal punishment, either now or at the hour of death. Ask earnestly for grace in all your actions to seek what nature, perfection, and mortification require, and further, to be able to elicit all your actions as intensely as the infused and acquired habits of virtue exist in your interior, so that all your actions may correspond adequately to your knowledge, and may most perfectly fulfil in all respects the intentions of the Divine Government. Ask to live a long life in great sanctity, and with immense fruit of souls. Beg for the grace to treat your body roughly, without thereby injuring greater goods, such as health; ask to preach, talk, and hear confessions usefully, and to have some pain sent you at fit times whenever you have any debt of temporal punishment to pay. Nay, go so far as to implore our dear Lord to enable you, as near as may be, to direct all your faculties, senses, limbs, and actions, as His Divinity directed the same things in His Sacred Humanity.

Petition God the Father, 1, for the vigilance and exemplary life of the pastors of Holy Church, for the conversion of infidels, heretics, schismatics, sinners, and lukewarm souls, and for the perpetual and perse-

vering multiplication of saints, and their advancement in the ways of the Spirit; 2, for the religion and love of justice of kings and temporal rulers, for their mutual concord, and success in lawful undertakings; 3, for help and consolation to the afflicted in poverty or sickness, for patience for the persecuted, and deliverance, if it be consistent with the greater glory of God; 4, for abundant gifts of grace and glory for your adversaries; 5, for your Order or Congregation ask the Eternal Father for the mortification of all passions, for devotion, edifying life, zeal for souls, perpetual fruits of virtue, progress in sacred sciences, protection in tribulations, a sufficiency of temporal revenue, and an abundance of workmen for the vineyard of the Lord; 6, pray to His compassionate Majesty for all the dead members of your Congregation, those especially who have lately died, and have been commended to the suffrages of the community; also for all your adversaries who are dead, for your relations, friends, and others, especially those for whom few or no prayers are offered, that they may be liberated as soon as possible from purgatory, and become your peculiar patrons in heaven; 7, pray for all the affairs which superiors have recently commended to your prayers, or if it be persons for whom you are told to pray, ask God to assist them in the particular respect for which they have desired or needed your prayers.

6, Our next duty is to make sundry acts of different virtues respecting the Blessed Sacrament; and 1, of adoration. Adore with divine worship that sweet Sacrament received into yourself and reserved in so many churches all through the world. This act of loving adoration may be made more intense by think-

ing of all those churches in which the Blessed Sacrament is but little honoured, or where He is as it were a prisoner in the hand of Greek Schismatics, or of the countries in which grave sins are committed against His worship; 2, of faith, considering Christ, whom you have received, to be both true God and true man, and to whose Divinity and Humanity belong all those things which Holy Church believes of them, or which heretics have denied; 3, of hope, expecting from Christ, as God and First Cause, many natural gifts, as well as supernatural graces and glory, and expecting the same also through His merits, as Man; 4, of charity, first embracing Him fervently in your interior will as God and Man; secondly, rejoicing that His Divinity is so perfect in itself and in respect of us, that we cannot perfectly know it; thirdly, exulting that His Divinity is so worshipped and beloved in heaven by the angels and saints and by just men on earth, and that His Body and Soul are so unspeakably blessed in heaven, and adorned with such incomparable gifts; fourthly, grieving deeply that so many sins have been, are being, and will be committed against His dear love by ourselves or by others, and grieving most of all that so many for whom He has done and suffered so much are lost through their own wilful perversity; and then last of all, desiring with tenderest love that all sins and imperfections might cease in the world as soon as possible, that the just might be multiplied, and the saints advanced in perfection and perseverance; that infidels and all out of the true Church might be brought to the holy faith, and that God, and Christ, as Man, might be honoured and loved by men in that way, and to that degree in which God desires that

Himself and the Sacred Humanity of Christ should be loved and honoured.

7. We must contemplate in our dear Lord, as God, the attributes of His Divinity and His other perfections, and elicit different acts with respect to them, First, we must think of His independence, or, as theologians call it, His self-existence, (*aseitas*,) and ask Him to give us the grace to depend on no one but on Him alone, and on superiors only for His sake. Secondly, we must reflect on His eternity, and ask Him for long life to serve Him and suffer greatly for Him. Then we must look at His omnipresence, and desire that He may be known and loved in all places, and make a most burning act of love and adoration to recompense Him for all the sins which are being committed this moment in the boundless temple of His most pure and dread immensity. Next we must think of the infinite energy of our Blessed Lord in producing both natural and supernatural effects, and ask Him to give us natural and supernatural gifts of every kind, to the end we may be as a bait or a net to allure all men, and captivate them to His love. Fifthly, we must consider His infinite wisdom, and ask Him to make us wise in all that regards the instruction of ourselves or others, and to pour out upon us the gifts of counsel, prudence, and discernment of spirits, and upon our whole Congregation growth in virtue and proficiency in theological studies, without which last we shall do but little for the saving of souls. Sixthly, we must meditate upon His goodness, and pray that in our actions God may see nothing that is not good; but this will only be the case when all our actions are done freely, without imperfections, and for a supernatural end, which

is God Himself. In the next place we must think of His Eternal Generation and Person, by which He is constituted Son, and beg of Him by His Divine Filiation to grant to us, as far as is possible, liberally and copiously, according to the measure of His ordinary power, all the natural and supernatural perfections of grace and glory which are communicable to His adopted sons, in the same sort as they were communicated to Him then, when He united in Himself the Person of the Eternal Word and Human Nature. Last of all, we must ponder His actual concurrence to all the actions of all creatures, and implore Him to give us the grace, that as He in each act refers His concurrence in and with us simply to Himself and His own glory as its end, so we in all our actions, without one exception, may work for, and because of Him, and that so perfectly that there may be nothing in us, direct or indirect, in which God's glory is not sought and found.

In the same way we may distinguish other perfections in God, and elicit acts connected with them: as, for example, of joy, rejoicing that God has these perfections in Himself, and of thanksgiving, because He has manifested them to us, and has communicated to us effects proportioned to them. In like manner we may distinguish the perfections of our Lord's Sacred Humanity, as well those which have to do with the integrity of human nature, such as the body with its limbs, and the soul with its powers, both rational and irrational, as those also which are superadded to nature, such as habits and acts, whether permanent, like the Beatific Vision, or transient, as talking, praying, working miracles, and the like. In considering the powers and habits of His blessed Soul, we should ask

Him to make our powers as like as possible to His, to adorn them with habits as His were adorned, and to excite them to acts as He excited His own. When we look at His Body hanging on the Cross, we must consider each limb, and pray that as the Word in that Body directed and moved that limb in the most perfect way, so He, the same Word, who has now entered into us by holy Communion, may rule and direct not only our interior powers, but all our limbs and outward actions, so that we may be, as it were, an impression and image of the Sacred Humanity, exhibiting all our inward and outward actions in a manner the most resembling that wherein our Lord acted both inwardly and outwardly; for this is the transformation, which the saints and holy doctors enumerate among the special fruits of Communion.

8. We are to conclude our thanksgiving by presenting our Blessed Lord, whom we have received in the Holy Eucharist, to all the orders of the beatified spirits. To the holy angels we may say, Behold, ye His highest ministers, who do His word, behold the First-born of the Eternal Father whom at that heavenly Father's bidding ye did adore when He entered into the world, and obtain for me the grace to serve Him with the same spirit and truth wherewith ye served Him during your probation, and serve Him now in your heavenly and blessed life. To the patriarchs and prophets we may say, Behold, ye ambassadors of heaven, and partners of the marvellous secrets of God, that Redeemer promised from the beginning of the world, whom ye desired and so long a time expected, and make me with all the powers and affections of my heart to pant after Him, and to sigh for my Beloved, day and night.

To the holy apostles we may say, Behold, illustrious preachers of the gospel, your beloved Master whom ye did love so ardently with your whole hearts, and make me to love Him fervently above all things, and with my deepest affections. To the holy martyrs, Behold, brave witnesses of the faith, Christ crucified, for the love of whom ye did so willingly shed your blood; oh gain for me the grace always to be suffering pain foı Him, and to live ever on the cross, and that a hard cross, whether nature with her strength fastens me upon it, or the hands of evil men, and straight from the cross to pass unto my Lord. To the confessor pontiffs, Behold, ye shepherds of the Lord's flock, the Immaculate Lamb, whom ye were once wont to sacrifice to Almighty God in the odour of sweetness on the holy altar, enable me to occupy myself worthily in so great a sacrifice, to offer it aright to God, and ever associating myself with that sacred Oblation, to offer myself perpetually to Him by good works in the odour of sweetness. To confessors religious, Behold, faithful servant of my Lord, your sweet and beloved Lord, for whom in reality as well as in desire, ye did forsake all the pleasures of this world; enable me for His love to persevere till death in my state, however dishonourable or poor, and to climb to the height of great holiness for the pure love of God alone. To the saints and beati of our own congregation, Behold, most dear brothers, your Leader, to whom in word and work ye were so truly conformed in this life, grant to me and all my brothers still fighting for His honour in the Church below a plentiful prey of souls, without detriment to our interior piety, and multiply our numbers with crowds of excellent labourers called to the same harvest,

who shall pass with mighty sheaves of merits to His blissful society and yours. To the holy virgins, Behold, ye spouses of the Immaculate Lamb, Him for whom ye did keep your virginity with so much exultation; make me to appear ever before the eyes of your Beloved and mine, pure both in heart and work, and free from all stain of sin and all obligation of punishment, to pass straight from this life to Him in heaven. To all the saints, Behold, my dearest friends, who are the consolation of my poor soul, the Master, Author, and reward of your sanctity; get me grace to walk as ye did by mighty strides of holiness, and conformably to the spirit of my institute, so that the increasing series of my years may never find me lingering where I was before, but ever mounting upward to the heights of holiness.

Then we may say to our dearest Lord, "Now, O my Lord, I retire from Thee for a little while, yet not without Thee! No! for Thou art the consolation, felicity, and every good of my soul. I commend myself with all vehemence to Thy most ample charity, with all my brothers, friends, and enemies. Love us, O Lord, as much as Thou canst, and inebriate us with Thy love, and transform us into Thy likeness, O joy and exultation of our hearts; and grant that we may live wholly in Thee, be wholly occupied with Thee and for Thee, and that we may have no object in any of our words and actions, within us or without, but only Thee, our Love and our every good; who livest and reignest," &c. And last of all we may say the Respice, "Look down, we beseech Thee, O Lord, on this Thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and

to suffer the torment of the cross; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen."

Now, I repeat that I am not advising any one to use this thanksgiving just as it stands, but only that we should draw from it, according as we require, streams of living water to freshen our dry hearts, and to adorn them with the variety of devotion. It deserves to be carefully studied; for it really is a treatise of holy living in itself, and that of the most consistent description. It portrays, and would help to form a definite spiritual character. There are in it wishes taken for granted, and petitions offered to God, at which perhaps we start and tremble. Even these are good for our souls. Lancisius gives them as if no devout soul would dream of shrinking from them. We must not use them out of our own heads; but it is good to be humbled; and it must humble us to see how far off we are from what we ought to be, and, perhaps, which is more to the point, from what we thought ourselves to be. We are humbled, but not discouraged. For if we were discouraged, it would show that we had really no spirituality in us at all, and were but standing yet by the starting-place, whereas, we should by this time have been at least in sight of the blessed goal.

There is also another thing in this form of thanksgiving, which deserves to be dwelt upon. It brings out so very much the devotion to the Person of the Eternal Word. The want of this is the cause of much shallowness, and of much dryness in prayer; and especially to it may be traced the absence of that deep spirit of adoration which should distinguish the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and also the barrenness of soul

which frequent communion seems sometimes rather to increase than to relieve. Let us only preach and teach the Divinity of Jesus, no matter how uninviting may be the notion of theological sermons, and we shall soon see how hearts will melt without eloquence of ours, and how Bethlehem and Calvary will give out their rich depths of tenderness to the poorest and the simplest of Christ's humble poor. Oh, to how many has meditation become a different thing, when they carried to the Crib or the Cross the light of our dear Lord's Divinity along with them! Though they were ordinarily in no high states of prayer, nor in the practice of self-crucifying austerities, their prayer, through the beam of this one doctrine, has often ended, as if they were very contemplatives, in the bosom of the Most Holy Trinity. Many have there been who could not put into words what happened to them; but to whose state of mind, for a little while at least, Dante's words* would not have been unsuitable:—

> Then "Glory to the Father, to the Son,
> And to the Holy Ghost," rang aloud
> Throughout all Paradise; that with the song
> My spirit reeled, so passing sweet the strain.
> And what I saw was equal ecstasy;
> One universal smile it seemed of all things;
> Joy past compare; gladness unutterable;
> Imperishable life and peace and love;
> Exhaustless riches, and immeasurable bliss

But it is now time to ask ourselves the important question, what has been our own practice hitherto with regard to the duty of thanksgiving in general? What is our habitual feeling about God's numberless blessings

* Parad. xxvii.

to us? How long a time have we ever spent in summing up God's blessings to us, even when we have been in retreat? St. Ignatius wisely tells us to commence our examination of conscience every day with counting up the mercies of God and thanking Him for them. Have we so much as kept faithfully to this little practice? Many of us have regular times in the day for different spiritual duties; have we any time specially set apart for thanksgiving? Many of us, again, keep in our prayer-books a little note of the things and persons to pray for; have we any similar memento of the blessings for which we desire daily to thank our heavenly Father? How often have we besieged the Throne of grace for weeks and weeks with Paters, Aves, Misereres, Memorares, rosaries, communions, and even penances, for something we desired; and when at last our dear Lord condescended to our importunity, what proportion did our thanksgiving bear to our supplication? How long did it last? In what did it consist? With what fervour and increase of love was it accompanied? Was it a single Te Deum, a hurried Deo gratias, and we took with an ungraceful eagerness what God held out to us, almost as if it was our wages, and then, beyond a general vague feeling of gratitude, thought nothing more about it? Alas! I fear we have all great need to take shame to ourselves in this respect. So far from having an abiding spirit of thanksgiving, or a keen life-long recollection of God's mercies, and a loving regularity in the worship and sacrifice of thanksgiving, we go on letting the Holy Spirit Himself touch our hearts with an intimate sense of our obligations to God and our dependence upon Him, waiting till He does do so, and then feebly responding to His call; so that we let Him,

as it were, ask for our thanks, rather than pay them with a free heart, and out of an abounding love. We should be quick enough to see the wretchedness of all this, if a fellow-creature did it to ourselves. But answer these questions honestly to your guardian angels, and then say if you think I exaggerated when I said that the disproportion of thanksgiving to prayer was one of the wonders of the world, and one of its saddest wonders too.

And what is the cause of all this? I do not care if I write it again and again, till you are weary of reading it, if only that would insure your remembering it. It comes from your perverse refusal to look at God as your Father. Independent of open sin, there is scarcely a misery which does not come from these hard, dry, churlish views of God. That is the root of the evil. You must lay the axe there, if you really desire to be other than you are. No schemes for self-improvement will stand in the stead of it. You may meditate and examine your conscience and tell your beads, and little enough will come of it, as you have so often found already. Oh how wonderfully people can be regular in making their daily meditation, and yet it never melts into them! Not a passion is subdued, not an unloveliness smoothed away! They have the custom of prayer, without the gift of it. You may do penances, and they will rather harden your heart in a delusion of vain-glorious humility, than melt into simple genuine love. The very sacraments will work only like machines out of order. Whether it is stunted growth in the spiritual life which you deplore, or the absence of all sensible devotion, or incapacity to make or keep generous resolutions, or teasing relapses into

unworthyimperfections, or want of reverence in prayer, or lack of sweetness with others, in almost every case the mischief may be traced up to an unaffectionate view of God. You must get clear of this. You must cultivate a filial feeling toward Him. You must pray to the Holy Spirit for His gift of *piety*, whose special office it is to produce this feeling. Your most prominent idea of God must be, as Him "of whom all paternity is named in heaven and on earth." You must remember that the Spirit of Jesus is the one true Spirit; and that He is the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father! You will never be right until your view of God as your Father swallows up all your other views of Him, or at least till they are brought into harmonious subordination to that view, which is the sweet soul of the Gospel, and the life of our Blessed Saviour's teaching. A man could not do better than devote his whole life to be the apostle of this one idea, the compassionate Paternity of God.

In matters of spiritual progress our interests are identical with God's glory. This is another of His loving contrivances. Hence we may still further persuade ourselves to the practice of thanksgiving by reflecting on the benefits which result from it to ourselves in a spiritual point of view. Growth in holiness is nothing but the continual descent upon us of those fresh graces which crown every act of correspondence on our part to graces already received; and there is nothing, as we know, which so multiplies graces upon us, or causes God to throw the doors of His treasury so wide open, as the devotion of thanksgiving. But it is not only in this way that it helps us on in holiness. Its effects upon our mind must also be taken into account. Many

persons try to advance in spirituality, and are held back, as it were, by some invisible hand. The fact is, and they do not realize it, they have never been thoroughly converted to God. They have stayed too short a time in the purgative way of the spiritual life, or they have bargained with God, and kept back some attachment, or wished to loosen themselves from unworthy habits gently and gradually, so as to be spared the pain of conversion. Now thanksgiving swiftly but imperceptibly turns our religion into a service of love; it draws us to take God's view of things, to range ourselves on His side even against ourselves, and to identify ourselves with His interests even when they seem to be in opposition to our own. Hence we are led to break more effectually with the world, and not to trail its clouds and mists along with us on our road to heaven. Hence also we come to root and ground ourselves more effectually in the sense of our own vileness and worse than nothingness before God. And what is all this but to make our conversion more thorough and complete?

Neither is the effect of thanksgiving less upon our growth than it is upon our conversion. All growth comes of love; and love is at once both the cause and effect of thanksgiving. What light and air are to plants, that is the sense of God's Presence to the virtues; and thanksgiving makes this sensible Presence of God almost a habit in our souls. For it leads us continually to see mercies which we should not otherwise have perceived, and it enables us far more worthily to appreciate their value, and in some degree to sound the abyss of Divine condescension out of which they come. Moreover, the practice of thanksgiving in ourselves leads us

to be distressed at the absence of it in others; and this keeps our love of God delicate and sensitive, and breeds in us a spirit of reparation, which is especially congenial to the growth of holiness. Our hearts are enlarged while we are magnifying God, and when our hearts are enlarged we run the way of His commandments, where we have only walked or crept before. We feel a secret force in overcoming obstacles and in despising fears, and altogether a liberty in well-doing, which we used not to feel before; and all because thanksgiving has made us measure the height of God's goodness and the depth of our vileness; and so nothing looks too much or too hard where the glory of God is concerned. Like Areuna in the time of the pestilence, we give to the king as kings ourselves, and in the spirit of kings. Our hearts are crowned with thanksgiving.

It is a great mistake to think lightly of happiness in religion, of enjoyment in religious services, of sweetness in prayer, of gladness in mortification, and of sensible devotion. True it is that when God subtracts them, it is not necessarily in anger or as a chastisement; and whatever be the cause, our plain duty is to submit ourselves to His sweet though inscrutable Will. But this does not hinder all these things from being mighty aids in the spiritual life; and therefore to be desired and coveted with earnestness, though in a submissive spirit. Who does not know cases where every thing seems to go wrong because a person has no happiness in religion? Even at Mass and benediction a vail is over their hearts, which neither music, nor brightness, nor yet the Divine Presence can go through. God's blessings are as dull to such people, as His chastisements are to the generality of men. Prayer is a penance;

confession a torture; communion a very rack. What God blesses for them, irritates like a sore. What He fills with peace, troubles them with disquietude. They have no light but the gloom of their own perverse moodiness; and they have no song but peevishness. Inquire if such persons have ever had a spirit of thanksgiving, and you will find you have hit exactly on the characteristic omission of their lives. Perhaps they have been converts to the holy faith. They have obeyed grace grudgingly. When they were safe in the Church, they would see difficulties every where, from the pope and Roman manners downward. Imaginary evils surrounded every step. There was temporal unhappiness; and was the faith worth it? There was the annoyance of learning a new religion, and new ceremonies, and this made them snappish. Then preachers said such strong things; and they must complain to a score of people of this, as if every thing was to be suited to them. It was the Assumption, and the dear good Irish wanted to hear of their Mother's Coronation; but then this important convert was at church, and should have been consulted. It was so unkind, so injurious, in his or her presence, to say our Lady had twelve stars on her head. Were they planets or fixed stars? The whole matter is full of difficulties. Really, preachers should be more careful! Then in the confessional it was all so uncomfortable, so coarse, and vulgar, and matter of fact. Thus, from one cause or other, the poor convert has been miserable ever since conversion; and why? Immersed in self, and magnifying self, seeking consolations, and hungering after sympathy, such persons have hardly once fallen like children on their knees to thank God for the miracle of love which

brought them where they are. A thankful heart would have taken joyously all the incipient difficulties of its new position, as a penance for the hard-heartedness which had given grace so much trouble and so many efforts in the process of conversion. But these persons were not thankful, and so they are not happy. This is another point to be made much of, that happiness in religion comes from the spirit of thanksgiving.

Now for a few words to show how by this devotion of thanksgiving we can do our three things, promote the glory of God, advance the interests of Jesus, and help in the saving of souls. First, as to the promotion of the glory of God. He has chosen to rest His glory in great measure on the praise and thanksgiving of His creatures. Thanksgiving was one of the ends for which He created us. Neither is there any matter in which He is so defrauded of His glory as in this, and none consequently in which He looks more for reparation from His faithful servants. No one ever thanks Him with devout intention who does not at once and thereby give Him glory. I said that joy came of thanksgiving; and the spirit of thanksgiving seems, not only to accompany that joy which is a special fruit of the Holy Ghost, but to be manifested in all the special devotions which have to do with joy. Those who have had a special devotion to St. Raphael, the angel of joy, have generally had a more than usual gift of thanksgiving. We see this even in the book of Tobias, without coming to the examples of the Saints most devoted to that dear spirit, as St. John of God, the Blessed Benvenuta, St. Giacinta Mariscotti, and others. "Father! he gave joy;" this is the character the young Tobias gives St. Raphael. And when he is about to make himself

known, he says to them, "Bless ye the God of heaven; give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He hath shown His mercy to you. For it is good to hide the secret of a king; but honourable to reveal and confess the works of God." And again, "When I was with you, I was there by the will of God: bless ye Him and sing praises to Him." And again, "It is time that I return to Him that sent me; but bless ye God, and publish all His wonderful works." Probably as he parted from them, he let them see a glimpse of his angelic beauty, as they immediately went into an ecstasy of three hours, and what it left behind was the spirit of thanksgiving. "Then they, lying prostrate for three hours upon their face, blessed God; and rising up, they told all his wonderful works." "Then Tobias the elder opening his mouth, said, "Give glory to the Lord, ye children of Israel. See what He hath done for us, and with fear and trembling give ye glory to Him, and extol the eternal King of worlds. Bless ye the Lord, all his elect, keep days of joy, and give glory to Him. Jerusalem, city of God, give glory to the Lord for thy good things." And how beautiful was his close, after the angel had left his mantle of joy and thanksgiving on the holy old man! "The rest of his life was in joy; and with great increase of the fear of God, he departed in peace." And with the young Tobias the joy lived after him, and was instead of mourning for him; for it is said, "And after he had lived ninety-nine years in the fear of the Lord, with joy they buried him; like the joy there is so often found in religious houses, when God has called one of the community to Himself, and which is sometimes almost a scandal to externs who know not the deep unearthly spirit of the cloister.

Secondly, this same devotion gives us great means of furthering the interests of Jesus. What was there upon earth which He sought more vehemently than His Father's glory? Though it is said of Him that He knew what was in men and would not trust Himself to them, yet He vouchsafed to appear surprised that only one of the ten lepers returned to give thanks to God. And how full of mystery is that outburst of thanksgiving on His own part, when He thanked His Father, and confessed before Him, because He had hidden His mysteries from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them to babes. But there is one way especially which I would venture to suggest as a means of promoting the interests of Jesus, and that in a most loving manner, and with little trouble to ourselves. It is by assuming to ourselves a little apostolate to spread the practice of thanksgiving. There are few of us who do not influence some others, children, or servants, or friends. Let us teach them to make more frequent, more systematic, more fervent thanksgiving. Let us say a seasonable word for this practice whenever we can. If each of the now nearly ten thousand members of the Confraternity of the Precious Blood persuaded five people, in honour of our dear Lord's Five Wounds, to make daily thanksgiving, these five would in turn spread it to others, as the ripples spread on the surface of a pond; and anyhow, how much would Jesus rejoice at this harvest of God's glory from something like fifty thousand souls, making daily one act of thanksgiving more than they otherwise would have done, one Deo gratias, if it were nothing more. Think of all that is involved of grace, merit, glory, worship, praise, acceptableness in one Deo gra-

tias said with devout intention; and yet with but a little exertion the Confraternity could send up to the blessed but outraged Majesty of God in each year eighteen millions two hundred and fifty thousand of these supernatural acts! Oh, why do we let so much that we could do for God slip by without a trial! What a homage of love to Jesus would this easy apostolate of thanksgiving be! Let us begin at once, this very day; for time is flowing from under us, and we have kept God's glory waiting long enough!

Thus also in schools and seminaries, and in domestic families, especially where there are many young children, out of whose pure mouths God has ordained His praise, little associations might be formed to say some ejaculation of thanksgiving daily by themselves, and where it seems feasible to make some little act of thanksgiving in common, as well as to endeavour to put more of a thoughtful intention into the grace before and after meals. The object of these little associations might be to thank God generally for all His goodness to His creatures, or especially for the Incarnation, or again for His mercifully giving us Mary to be our mother as well as His. An Irish school might thus unite morning and afternoon in a little act of thanksgiving for the gift of the most holy Roman faith; and thus the children could at once bless God for the national grace of their country, make reparation for apostasies, and also themselves gain a habit which would be an effectual protection to them in the temptations of after-life. These associations might be connected, if it was thought well, with devotion to the Holy Angels, whose life is one incessant song of grateful praise, and thus the virtue of purity, the attendant

gift of this devotion, might at the same time be fostered in the souls of the youthful members. If we think aright of the glory of God, in one word, if we love Him, these things will not seem small, nor their blessing insignificant. We have much lost time to make up in this matter of thanksgiving.

Oh, what glory cannot one man get for our dearest Lord, if he only lays himself out to do it! St. Jerome, while he lived in the East, often heard the oriental monks intoning their doxology, Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. It took with him, and he asked Pope Damasus to establish it in the Western Church, where, humanly speaking, but for him it would never have been used. Who can count the million millions of times that doxology has been used in the West with loving and devout intention? Look how often it comes in the Divine Office. Now, every time St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi said it, she accompanied it by a mental offering of herself to the Most Holy Trinity, and bowed her head, as it were, to the block to be martyred for the faith. Whenever St. Alphonso, in his old age, heard of some good news for the glory of God or the welfare of Holy Church, he cried out with heartfelt emotion, "Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto." Great things are told us of the devotion of the Blessed Paul of the Cross to this doxology, and he taught the same spiritual devotion to his religious. The lives of the saints would doubtless furnish us with many other devotions of heroic love which have been connected with this doxology. Yet if St. Jerome had not one day asked Pope Damasus to introduce it into the Western Church, all this glory would have been lost to God. When men do any thing

for God, the very least thing, they never know where it will end, nor what amount of work it will do for Him. Love's secret, therefore, is to be always doing things for God, and not to mind because they are such very little ones. "Cast thy bread upon the running waters; for after a long time thou shalt find it again. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thy hand cease: for thou knowest not which may rather spring up, this or that; and if both together, it shall be the better."*

Thirdly, this devotion would be of great help in saving many souls. We ourselves by the practice of it should gain such favour with God as would enable us to impetrate graces which are far above the feebleness of our present prayers. Oh, we should see such things happen! Such a throwing open of the treasures of God's mercy, such inundations of grace, such obstinate hearts overcome, such new benedictions poured out over the whole Church! Then again, by making daily reparation to God for the ingratitude and unmindfulness of sinners, we should appease His anger against them, and thus avert from them many judgments and chastisements, both spiritual and temporal. It is astonishing in how many indirect ways God lovingly allows us to co-operate in the salvation of souls. I wish we were more ingenious in finding them out, and more unwearying in the practice of them! Poor souls! we have given you scandals enough; would we could at least equal them now by prayers and by thanksgivings! It does not seem as if the Precious Blood were half our own, till it has become yours also. Oh, may I never

* Eccles. xi. 1, 6.

forget that there may be souls on earth whose glory God has tied to my zeal and prayer! There may be a dear soul, whom God has loved from all eternity, and decreed to call it out of nothing in preference to millions of souls He might have created instead; a dear soul whom Jesus thought of by name upon the Cross, and offered for it with distinct oblation all His sufferings; a dear soul for whose company Mary yearns in heaven; and whether or no it shall see God, and be His king and priest for ever, clothed with incomparable beauty, and crowned with inexpressible gifts, and plunged in an everlasting sea of joy, has been hung by an adorable venture of Divine Love upon my unconscious prayer! Ah Lord! when saw I Thee hungry and fed Thee not, thirsty, and gave Thee not to drink? Oh may His answer never cease to sound in my love-frightened ear. Inasmuch as thou hast not done it unto the least of these My brethren, thou hast not done it unto Me!

CHAPTER VIII.

Praise and Desire.

WHEN of science lead us into every nook and corner of the world to show us, even in the case of the vilest insects and the adaptation of their habits and instincts to their wants and weaknesses, how full creation is not only of the wisdom and the power, but of the minute considerateness and tender compassion of the Almighty. We have seen precisely the same thing in the spiritual world, and its supernatural arrangements. All is for love; and that to an extent which almost tries our faith. God loves us with a surpassing love, and He longs to be loved by us, and He lavishes upon us with an incredible profusion the most unthought-of means of loving Him and increasing His glory. Theology is the counterpart of physical science. It can tell us quite as wonderful things of the angels whom we have never seen, as astronomy can of the stars we can never reach. The science of the laws of grace is a parallel to the

science of the laws of life. The history and constitution of the Church is as startling in its wonders as are the records of geology. With the help of revelation, the Church, reason, and the light of the Holy Ghost, Catholic theologians have explored spirit with at least quite as much certainty and success as modern science has explored matter. Those who smile when we speak so intimately of the different choirs of angels, are like those who smile when they are told the bulk of a planet, or that it is made of some material as light as cork. The unbelief of ignorance causes the smile in both. The immense intellect of man was once directed upon the life of God, His perfections, His incarnation, and His communications of Himself. Revelation gave it countless infallible axioms, and that greatest glory of the human mind, Catholic theology, was the result. The same immense power is now brought to bear upon the currents of the ocean and the circles of the winds, upon electrical phenomena, and the chemistry of the stars, and the result is wonderful enough in the system of modern science; yet hardly so wonderful, even as an exhibition of mental power, as are the summas of scholastic theology.

It is our ignorance of our religion which more than any thing else prevents our discerning the extreme lovingness of God. To the savage, on whose inobservant mind no phenomena are forced but those of power, such as the storm, the flash, the sun, the sea, the wind,—the Creator is simply a Spirit of might. Could he see the affections and instincts of animals, as science would put them before him, then he would come to change his notion of the Creator. So when men are absorbed in worldly pursuits, and do not occupy themselves in the

things of God, it is only the phenomena of power in religion, such as death, mortal sin, judgment, hell, predestination, which engage their attention. They must descend into the minute laws of grace, the secrets of prayer, the arrangements of merit and glory, the affectionateness of indulgences, the sweet mysteries of Jesus and Mary, in order to get any thing like a true idea of the length and breadth of God's amazing love. The thunderclap can strike the inattentive; but it is only the listener that catches the sealike whispers of the summer-air in the pine-tree tops.

We have seen how God enables us to love Him by giving us all His own perfections, and the mysteries of His dear Son, to offer as our very own to His blessed Majesty, and further, by teaching us how to unite our little services to the intentions and actions of our Lord; and how all these things can be used alike for intercession, for thanksgiving, or for praise. But we may now go a step farther, and say that in His anxiety to be loved, and to give us the means of loving Him, He raises even our ineffectual desires to the dignity of effectual acts, and enables us to worship Him with a most heavenly and delightful worship, with the passing wishes of our loving hearts. He does not call only for blood, and pain, and sacrifice. He does not refuse to feed His glory on any thing short of heroic self-immolation. The faintest heart in creation may love Him, and love Him with an abundant love.

We can all perhaps remember when we were young the books called the Tarry-at-Home Traveller, and the objects they put before us. We could sit at ease in our sunny nursery, rocking on a rocking-chair, with the scattered toys and the dilapidated houses of wooden

bricks around us,—tokens of a play which had interested and tired us an hour ago, and amid all these comforts we could cross the sandy plains of Africa, or thread the flowering forests of Brazil, amuse ourselves with the mud volcanoes of Iceland, or watch the Tartars from off the Great Wall of China; and if when night came on we did look into our little beds to see if a cobra di capello were lurking there, or we were mayhap shipwrecked in a dream, they were but the vainest of alarms, and even they could give a zest to the morrow. Now, God's love has realized in our devotions something very like this Tarry-at-Home Travelling. We can go from country to country on the earth, wishing God more glory, and worshipping Jesus in neglected tabernacles. We can brood over the dim realms of purgatory, and sigh and wish for God's glory and the interests of Jesus. We can range the courts of heaven with undazzled eye, and worship there by inward wishes and by mental praises. We can pass from attribute to attribute of the Divine Majesty with congratulations, joys, desires, nay, even with impossible wishes it were more perfect. And all the while this is no mere amusement, no merely lawful occupation of our minds with the dear and deep things of God. But it is substantial worship, something with which the eternal Majesty is positively pleased, adoration impetrating actual graces, and securing corresponding degrees of glory.

In truth there is nothing in the world so substantial as all these things. The rocky mountain is less real than true worship. Suffering even is but an unreality compared with that which has power to please the incomprehensible God. Grace being a participation of

the Divine Nature, is a thousand times more solid than all the natures of men and animals: and the law of gravity is less certain than the unimaginable glory of the Blessed. Truly the ways of God, are above our ways, and we soon get out of our depth in His loving counsels! If we, with the little dim discernment we can have of spiritual things, can touch and handle the amazing reality of every thing which has to do with God, what wonder that the saints should have spoken so lightly and so contemptuously of the things of earth, as if pain and pleasure, life and death, were so indistinguishably small, that it mattered not whether the one or the other befell a man. Verily there is no science like the science of loving God.

The subject then that I want to bring before you now is that of Praise and Desire, with the devout practices of them left on record for us by holy men. Praise is something more than thanksgiving. It is blessing God for His goodness, His power, His purity, His beauty. It is congratulating Him that He is what He is, and that there is none like Him. It is calling on all His angels and saints to praise and glorify Him with all their might: and rising from them to Mary, we implore her to praise the Majesty of God for us more worthily than we ourselves can do; and exhausting all the treasures of her almost divine prerogatives, we rise to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is like a boundless sea, every one of whose waves gleams and lightens with unutterable praise of God; but even that has limits, though the dear little French picture of the angel trying to fathom the Sacred Heart, and his lead not reaching half way, may be true enough so far as the power of men or angels to fathom it is conceived; and by love,

from excess of love becoming unabashed, we dare to throw ourselves into the bosom of the Most High, and listen ecstatically to His many-voiced praise and benediction of Himself. This is a different spirit from that which measures the necessities of obedience, investigates its claim on God, ascertains the extent to which He has bound Himself by covenant, and follows the probable opinion which is in favour of the laxest practice. I am not saying this latter spirit is wrong. I am neither criticizing nor finding fault with any thing. I am only saying, what is clearly undeniable, that it is a very different spirit from the spirit of Praise. Moreover, the spirit of Praise is easier and sweeter. It brings no suffering along with it; it involves no austerity; it implies no arduous heights of prayer. There is not in devotion a more childlike spirit than it is. But it is not only a different spirit; it produces a different character, a different kind of spirituality. It entices us to serve God out of love. Hence it finds its proper place in this treatise, which would not be complete without it.

By desire, I do not mean what theologians call the love of concupiscence, by which we all covet God as our own ultimate end and sovereign good. That love of concupiscence does not enter into my subject. But by Desire I mean the devotion which results in the heart from the two loves of Complacency and Benevolence, to be afterward explained. It is wishing God more love, more obedience, more glory from men. It is desiring for Him, out of love, the augmentation of every thing in heaven, earth, hell, and purgatory, on which His accidental glory can feed and be increased. It is wishing even impossible wishes, as that He were more perfect and beautiful than He is, who is simple perfec-

tion and absolute beauty. It is wishing we could be martyred for the faith, or clear hell, or empty purgatory. It is wishing, even till sorrow and condolence spring up in our hearts, that sins might cease, and scandals disappear, and lukewarmness evaporate from the face of the earth, and most of all, that we ourselves could serve so drear and dread a Majesty otherwise than we do, and could have other hearts than those miserable icy stones which, so far as God is concerned, we carry about in our bosom all our lives long. It is wishing that every grain of the sea-sands, and every leaf of the forests had a seraph's intellect and voice to swell the chorus of God's praise. This, again, is a different spirit from wishing to escape hell-fire, from desiring a short purgatory, or to skip it altogether, from praying for a quiet life and an easy death-bed, from asking temporal blessings, and seeking cures from the relics of the saints, from coveting after the peace, and joy, and stability of heaven, merely or mainly, because of the irksomeness of earth's contraries. Once more, let me not be misunderstood. I am not saying that this last spirit is wrong. Not at all. I wish all the children of men were infected with it. But it is cognizably a different spirit from the spirit of Desire. And the spirit of Desire is easier and sweeter, and gives God greater glory. Besides this, it also, like the spirit of Praise, produces a different spirituality, and leads to the service of love.

These are the two things, Praise and Desire, which we are now to consider. Henceforth, I shall not speak of them separately; for they run in and out of each other so perpetually, that for convenience sake we may very well regard them as one thing. You see, to go

back to my old story—what I want of you is confidence in God. There is no worship worth the name of worship, which is not the voice of confidence. There is no love which is not confidence. But there can be no confidence without the filial feeling. We always get back again to the same point, God is our Father! Look at the perfections of God, His power as well as His love, His justice as well as His mercy. Consider one as much as the other; be as fair to one as to the other. So far as in our blindness we can at all estimate the character of God, or appreciate Him, we must acknowledge that there can be no acceptable worship of Him which is not based on confidence. This is the proper homage of the creature to its Creator. From the dreadful fear which worships the spirit of power with human sacrifice and fanatical suicide, to the mixed impertinence and superstition of fetishism, the absence of this filial feeling of confidence is the characteristic of every modification of false worship. The beautiful worship of God as our Father is distinguished by this very thing, that its chief exercise of love is in putting trust in the very perfections of God, which, to an unloving mind, would produce fear. It is a great act of love to trust, like a son, God's tremendous power. It is a greater still to remember what we are, and in spite of it to put all our confidence in His justice, to repose, as in a mother's lap, upon that very attribute which haunts the unloving like an unconquerable spectre, so long as they believe and live. All for love, and love for us all. All for Jesus, and Jesus for all. These are the two sides of religion. Every thing is here, all theology, earth, purgatory, heaven. Even the Jews perceived how every thing turned on men remembering

that God was their Father. "Nothing," says one of the Rabbinical books, "proves ardour in the worshipper more than the use of the words, Our Father." "Thrice blessed is he," says another, "who does good through love of God, over and above him who serves through fear." Such were even the traditions of the Jews. And now Jesus has come, softening and subduing all things to Himself, vailing His eternal glory in the sweet regards of human eyes, like unto His Mother's, pleasing not Himself, pouring love over the whole earth, to change the face of things; and yet—alas for the interests of Divine Love! alas for the Sacred Heart! how many Catholics contrive to make of this blessed faith and service, a dry, cold, formal, stingy, ungraceful worship, which the very prostrations and ablutions of a Mohammedan might upbraid and put to shame!

I have said before, that perhaps nothing strikes converts in the devotional system of the Church so much as the value and importance assigned to interior acts. They are surprised at the duty under pain of sin of acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, at recurring periods or under given circumstances. They are startled at the commentaries on our Lord's doctrine about committing sin in our hearts. They have to reconcile themselves to the influence attributed to intention. Now all this, just like the rest of the Catholic system, brings out God. God is a simple act. Whatsoever is done stands in a certain relation to God. All its meaning and reality is from this. Words, therefore, are but accidents. Nay, overt acts add but little, comparatively, to the malice of the interior will. The thought has been assented to: the intention has

been formed; the temptation has been deliberately admitted. The thing is irrevocable. It has touched God, and is stereotyped. He needs no index of the voice, nor consummation of the hands. It is an act, and ranks as such with Him, for good or evil, for reward or punishment. Sins of thought, says the Council of Trent, have these frightful characteristics; first, that they sometimes make a greater wound in the soul than sins of deed, and secondly, that they are sometimes more dangerous. Nonnunquam animam gravius sauciunt, et periculosiora sunt iis quæ manifeste admittuntur. They are also more numerous, more easily committed, and their approaches frighten us less. Now the reality of the merit of devout desires, of mental praise, and of all interior as well as spoken acts of devotion is the loving side of this question. They need be nothing more than interior acts. Nothing more is necessary. They have touched God as such, and so have received their value and their merit. Thus, turning the tables on sins of thought, we may say that these interior acts of piety sometimes make a greater impression on the soul than exterior ones; while they have the further advantages of being more numerous and more easily performed. But is it not enough to vex our love, to go and stand by the countless seas of men's hearts, and to watch the innumerable waves that stir and brighten in every one of them every minute, and to think there is not one wave or ripple that might not rival an angel's song for worth before the dear Majesty of God; and yet, that this treasure is so little used, that men take so little pains about it, and that God is so defrauded of His glory? So He loves us, and so He longs for our love,

that He has made it almost as easy, by the merits of Jesus, for our hearts to praise Him, as for the thurible to let the spires of sweet smoke issue through its per forated cover; and yet we will not do it!

It is hard to appreciate at their true value these interior acts. There was a nun in the convent of St. Mary Magdelene of Pazzi, by name Sister Maria Benedetta Vettori, whom the saint saw five hours after her death in a glory exceeding the beatitude of many other virgins of the monastery, and fearlessly gazing on the Humanity and Divinity of the Word. The Jesuit confessor then proceeds, "Wherefore, after having been a long time in admiring rapture, through joy at such a delightful sight, the saint began to exclaim at intervals, Oh happy thou, who knewest how to bear the hidden treasure! Oh what a great thing to be singular among the singular, and yet regarded as an ordinary one! The Word, had He merely regarded the works, would have had little to reward, for short has been the time for working. But oh, the goodness of God! who rewards every thought, and word, and wish! Great and continual were thy works, and practised by few, for they were interior! Oh the greatness of interior works, so little understood! One interior work is worth a thousand years of exterior exercises!" *Orat. Life, p.* 119.

Remember, then, this is what we start with. There is nothing in the world so real and substantial as the love of God. One act of Divine Love is a more finished thing than a statue of Phidias or Praxiteles. It is more firm than the foundations of the Alps. It is more enduring than the round world which God hath made so strong. All things are bubbles to it. They

have nothing in them. They mean little. They soon pass away. An act of love is a complete work, and has greater power and greater consequences than any other act. The mere act of dying is not equal to it. And yet this act of love can be made by a mental glance, quick as lightning, and piercing heaven. Such acts can be multiplied at will beyond our power of reckoning, and in the midst of apparently the most distracting occupations. So far from being weakened by repetition, they only grow more intense and more powerful. Yet they require no effort. To elicit them is even a pleasure to us. But when we put these facts alongside of our practice, it looks as if there must be a fallacy somewhere. All this can hardly be true, and yet we remain as we are. How incredible is the hardness of our own hearts! It is a fair match for the excess of God's love. Oh welcome then that beautiful spirit of reparation to the Majesty of God which so many of the saints have had! It is like making sweet honey out of bitter flowers. The little love we have for God thus, by this dear right of reparation, furnishes us with another means of loving Him still more. Who will say that all things are not contrived for love?

In order to get a clear idea of Praise and Desire, it will be necessary for us to enter somewhat into the question of Divine Love, its different kinds and manifestations. This, however, will be so far from leading us away from our subject, that it will throw great light upon many of the preceding chapters. Indeed, if All for Jesus be the same thing as All for love, then Divine Love is the very subject of the treatise. What is called by theologians the love of concupiscence is, I have said before, a holy longing after God as our last end, our

sovereign good, our exceeding great reward: as when St. Paul exclaimed, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. This love we ought to have all our lives long, though God may not always give us the gift to feel it sensibly. There is a remarkable passage in the revelations of St. Gertrude, which shows how acceptable to God is this longing to see Him, while it illustrates also the drawing which devout people mostly have to gaze intensely on the Blessed Sacrament. She was divinely instructed that as often as a man gazes with desire and devotion on the Host, where the Body of Christ lies hid sacramentally, so often does he increase his merit in heaven; and that in the future Vision of God to all eternity there shall be to him so many special and congruous joys as the times that on earth he gazed with desire and devotion on the Body of our Lord, or, which is greatly to our present purpose, when he so much as desired to do so, and was reasonably hindered from doing it.* Hence Lancisius† gives it as one of his special devotions for the octave of Corpus Christi to try to hear mass where you can see the Host lying on the corporal, or, if this be impossible, to look intently at It in the monstrance. So necessary in Christian things is familiarity in order to reverence! And observe well, that God is pleased to attach the same promise to the desire to see Him as to the actually doing so; so that the remarkable words of St. Lawrence Justinian‡ were no devotional exaggeration, when he said, "Let us persist in our prayers that better gifts may be daily given to us. For it very often happens that what merits cannot do, the intercession of de-

* L. iv. c. 25. † ii. 94. ‡ De Exalt. Crucis.

sires effects. Truly God rejoices so much in the prayers of supplicants, that He grants their wishes if only they come from a simple heart, an humble mind, and a faithful devotion. Only let these three conditions be united in a prayer, and whatever a man shall ask, according to God, he shall receive from the Father of lights and His Son Jesus Christ."

"What is unknown," says St. Austin, "cannot be loved; 'non enim diligitur nisi cognitum,' for, except as known it is not loved;" and St. Thomas expands this axiom very beautifully in the Secunda Sécundæ. It is this knowledge of God which leads us to those further kinds of love which we need to illustrate our subject of Praise and Desire; so I must try to do what seems very foolish—describe God.

God is simple, without body or distinction of parts. He is simple, because He has nothing borrowed. He is good without qualities, great without quantity, Creator, yet needing nothing, everywhere, yet without place, eternal, without term, and changing all things, without change Himself. He is good with an infinite goodness, and good to all, but specially good to men. He is infinite in the multitude of His perfections, in their intensity, and in their magnificence. He is present everywhere, in different manners, yet nowhere contracting soil or stain. He is immutable; His eternity defends Him from time, His immensity from change of place, and His wisdom from change of purpose. He is eternal without beginning as well as without end, and eternal with a life which exists all at once and altogether, and with a perfect possession of it. He subsists by the incomparable unity of His blessed nature, and it is the crowning interest of every man in the

world that God should be but One. He is sovereign purity, unspeakable sanctity, and most resplendent beauty. He is always in adorable tranquillity; no trouble can come nigh His Being. He is known to nature, to faith, to glory, yet He is incomprehensible by all. His name is the ineffable God. His science is beyond our thought, and is the source of His ravishing joy. His being is truth itself, and His life is the inexhaustible fountain of life. His will is worshipful, unblamable, supreme, and His liberty is without parallel and beyond words. His love of His creatures is eternal, constant, gratuitous, and singular; and His mercy is an unfathomable abyss of the most beautiful compassions and condescensions, and no less also of the most delicate judgments and the most tender retributions. His justice is as irreproachable as His sanctity, and as benevolent as His mercy. His power is illimitable, and full of love; and His blessedness is inaccessible. Yet all these are not separate perfections; but He is Himself all these excellencies, and He is one: Three co-equal, co-eternal, and consubstantial Persons, One only God. Such, in the dry language of the schools, is the description of Him who is our loving and indulgent Father, God over all blessed for evermore! Amen.

Can we read it, and not see that no half-allegiance will do for Him? He cannot reign over a divided heart, for who is he that can share the throne with Him? What but love can be our religion? for with what else can we worship Him? When we have dared to trust Him, then we have worshipped Him. And are not these attributes like the circles of the whirlpool, drawing us into themselves with the strong fascination

of His beauty? What can we do more than cry out with St. Francis of Sales, "O goodness so infinite, O infinity so good!" Yet it is only in proportion as these dry definitions breathe and burn with the heat and light of the Holy Spirit, that they touch our hearts with genuine love of God. But when they are so touched, as yours have long since been, then they lead us not only to long for God as our own Sovereign Good, but to long for something more. But let us first see what comes of this sweet-flavoured knowledge of God, where the will tastes what the mind perceives.

Now, if God cannot be loved unless He is first known, and if also He has arranged all creatures for the express purpose of communicating Himself to them and being loved by them, then it must follow that it is for the glory of God that His perfections should be known, and His goodness acknowledged. As our Lord said that when He was lifted up He should draw all men unto Him, so when the Divine Majesty is raised up before the eyes of men, the hearts of multitudes will be drawn toward it in adoration and trembling love. Hence, as the glory of God is one of the three objects we are putting before ourselves at present, we see how much we can promote it, no matter what our rank and condition may be, by making God better known by those who come in our way.

It is remarkable how few persons meditate on the attributes of God. They seem to imagine that little can be known, said, or thought about them; or at best that they are a subject for lofty contemplation rather than the humble meditation of beginners. If the mysteries of Jesus, the actions of the Sacred Humanity, were to be neglected for the divine attributes, there

can be no question it would be a delusion, and as St. Theresa teaches us, a very dangerous delusion. But it really seems almost necessary to fruitful meditation on the Sacred Humanity of our dear Lord, that meditation of the attributes of God should go along with it; and it is observable that when Blessed Paul of the Cross founded his Passionist nuns, their two objects of prayer were to be the Passion, and the attributes of God. It is sadly true, however, that with all classes of men, the perfections of God are infrequent subjects of thought. People will often start at being told things about God, as they would at some vision about the unrevealed actions of our Blessed Lord and our dear Lady, or at some tremendous announcement of modern science which upsets half our previous knowledge, and for the time throws it all into confusion. Surely this is the reason why God is so little loved, and why we are all so dry and unamiable in our way of serving Him, and especially why there is such an universal complaint that of all devotional practices, that of the presence of God is the hardest and most tedious. Now we are all of us having continual opportunities of saying a word for God, of making others recognise His wisdom, or acknowledge His goodness, of taking His side, and of contrasting what He would like with what men at large are actually doing. We see pious and worthy people with their instincts in the wrong direction; we are pained by the inconsistencies of those whose fervent self-denial we joyfully admire; and it is all because God is not known, and His true glory not discerned.

But even if opportunities of thus glorifying God by teaching Him to others were wanting to us, we can

always glorify Him by learning Him ourselves, by reading about Him and meditating upon Him, and by perpetually offering to His Majesty reverential and affectionate acts of Praise and Desire. We are dependent on nobody for this. We do not so much as need to speak. Yet we continue to glorify Him while we make acts of loving admiration of Him, or congratulate Him that His perfections are unspeakable, or offer to Him with humble reparation the praise due to Him from all those creatures that are this hour forgetting Him. Oh, how much could we do by patient love, by thoughtful love, by assiduous love!

Neither is it less for the interests of Jesus that the knowledge of God should be spread upon the earth. He came to save sinners, not only by dying for them, but by making His Father known to them. This is eternal life, that we should know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Our Lord is Himself the brightness of His Father's glory and the figure of His substance. As the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, He is the Eternal Word, the Father's knowledge of Himself, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also He made the world. Thus to publish the perfections of God to others, or to acknowledge them ourselves, is of all works the most acceptable to our dearest Lord, for it is the likeness of His own work, nay, rather it is His own work with which He allows us to co-operate. It is His own grandeur, they are His own perfections, which we are thus publishing and acknowledging. There is no fitter devotion to the Person of the Eternal Word than to laud and magnify the splendours of the Most Holy Trinity.

The salvation of souls is equally concerned in the

matter. What has been the experience of converts to the Catholic Church? It is not so much knowledge and love of Mary which they have acquired, as those they have left behind so often fancy. It is not so much the efficacy of grace, and the reality of the Sacraments which they have come to learn by their new religion: though what they have learned of these things, and especially of the doctrine of grace, is indeed most wonderful. But the great, the pre-eminent change in them since they became Catholics, has been their knowledge of God. The thought of God has been growing and expanding in them ever since, until their whole minds have become overshadowed with it. The chief fruit of an intense and enthusiastic devotion to our dear Lady has been to teach them more and more of God, and to magnify Him in their souls. When they look back on the old days of error, it does not look so much as if their ignorance had consisted in a disesteem of Mary or of the Blessed Eucharist, of penance or of purgatory, as in having a low idea of God; so that on the retrospect a man is led involuntarily to exclaim, "Why, I did not believe in God!" and the cry is hardly an exaggeration. Then first they know what a solid thing religion is. And oh! how sweet has the knowledge of God been, as well as a solid gain! It has put another face on life, on trial, pain, vicissitude, and suffering. It has been within them a fountain of refreshment springing up continually, or, as the prophet says, "The shadow of a great rock in a barren land." And it is not only sweetness which has been in it, but power also, power to do and power to endure. Yes! men little know how great and good a work it is they are doing, when they increase by ever so little another's

knowledge of the Most High. They have not stopped one sin, but hundreds. They have not been the channels of one grace, but of thousands. They have not taught one devotion, but all, all devotions in that one which comes of knowing one thing more of God than we knew before. The knowledge of God is the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the soul. How many more would be converted if they would only read and meditate on God! How many would advance in the spiritual life who now stand still, because the Divine Perfections are not preached to them, or do not make part of their spiritual reading! How many more Catholics would serve God out of pure love if they would make His character and attributes their study! I believe the bare perusal of the treatise De Deo, even with the dry harshness of its technical language, would do more to convert souls than any half-dozen of the most fervid and affecting spiritual books that ever were written. All glory be to God at least for those who have been led out of heresy into the bosom of the true Church, and have thus felt all that the growing knowledge of God has done for them, especially through devotion to His ever blessed Mother! For of their souls may it be most truly said,* "that the land that was desolate and impassable hath been glad; and the wilderness hath rejoiced and flourished like the lily. It hath budded forth and blossomed, and rejoiced with joy and praise. The glory of Libanus hath been given to it, the beauty of Carmel and Saron; they have seen the glory of the Lord, and the beauty of our God. And so the feeble hands have been strengthened, and

* Isa. xxxv.

the weak knees confirmed; and it has been said to the faint-hearted, Take courage, and fear not; and the eyes of the blind have been opened, and the ears of the deaf been unstopped. The lame man has leaped as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb been set free; for waters are broken out in the desert and streams in the wilderness. That which was dry land has become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. In the dens where dragons dwelt before, now rises up the verdure of the reed and the bulrush. A path and a way are there, and are called the Holy Way; and no lion can be there, nor any mischievous beast go up by it, or be found there; but they walk there that are delivered; and the redeemed of the Lord have returned, and have come into Sion with praise, and everlasting joy is upon their heads; for they have obtained joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning have fled away."

Let us now see what comes of this knowledge of God, which we receive by faith. We perceive Him to be the unspeakable fulness of all possible and incomprehensible perfections. As He is then an object immensely beautiful, He must therefore be immensely desirable, and is discerned as such by the understanding using the light of faith. Now, whenever the understanding beholds any thing which is desirable, there is an immediate feeling in the will, which is not a free act, but the necessary result of the law of our nature. This feeling is called complacency. But although this is not itself a free act, it at once begins to act unless the reason forbids it. It begins at once to exercise itself freely in expressions or sentiments of joy, pleasure, praise, and desire. It is thus we come to this second kind of Divine Love, the love of compla-

cency, rejoicing in God because he is so good, because He is Himself, because He is God. We congratulate Him on all this. Nay more, we wish an impossibility which goes beyond complacency, that He could be more good and more perfect; and this wish is a real mode of manifesting our love to Him. We desire also that as we can do nothing to increase His glory in Himself, we should at least increase His accidental glory, which comes from the obedience and love of His creatures, whom He has created for this end. This complacency comes, I say, from the very knowledge of God which faith imparts to us; and it is continually growing in us, unless sin and lukewarmness hinder and kill it. The case between God and the soul then stands thus, if we may venture to use Scripture language for these mutual acts of love. The soul, looking in delighted wonder over all this sea of beautiful attributes and perfections, seems to hear a Voice rising up from the surface of the many waters, and borne to its inmost ear, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee; and I will build thee again, and thou shall be built, O virgin of Israel."* And the soul murmurs, half in thought, half in reply, "Know ye that the Lord, He is God. I have said to the Lord, Thou art my God—Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever."† The Voice of the many waters comes again, "If any man shall hear my voice, and open to Me the gate, I will come into him, and sup with him. and he with Me."‡ And the soul, charmed out of herself, replies, "Let my Beloved come into His garden,

* Jer. xxxi. 3, 4. † Ps. xcix. xv. lxxii. ‡ Apoc. iii. 20.

and eat the fruit of His apple-trees."* Then, as if turning to angels and men, the Voice exclaims, "Behold, the smell of My son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed;"† and the soul hears, yet knows that nothing of its own is good, and so it too turns to angels and men, and says, "See how it is, the King brought me into His store-rooms, and His breasts are more than wine. God forbid that I should glory but in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me. A cluster of cypress my love is to me, in the vineyards of Engaddi."‡

How delightful is this complacency in God! There need be no bounds to it; it may be, if it could be, wide as God Himself. There can be no talk here of limit or of moderation. Moderation is baseness, fraud, and infidelity, where God is concerned. All God is before us, infinitely perfect, infinitely desirable, for us to rejoice in. What is earth? What are the things of earth? Shall we not be lifted up far above ourselves, our own petty wretchedness and misery, our own grovelling interests and low-born desires? God grows like a dawning splendour before us. We become like that good man mentioned in St. Philip's life who was seen retreating from the altar, step by step, with wonder and rapture depicted on his face, and who said that he was meditating on the Greatness of God, and it was growing upon him like something in pursuit, and thrusting him backward. The more we know of God, the more our complacency increases; because, to fill

---

* Cant. v. 1. † Gen. xxvii. 27.

‡ Cant. i. 3. Gal. vi. 14. Gal. ii. 20. Cant. i. 13.

our minds and engross us, the simple tnought of God must be multiplied and repeated from a thousand objects. It is like the sun lighting up a mountain chain. He is not multiplied himself, but as his golden magnificence lights up peak after peak, we become more and more surrounded by his effulgence. It is thus with God: each attribute to which we give a name, though His attributes are in truth His Simple Self, is to us as a separate height crowned and glowing with His glory, and so reflecting Him upon our souls; while the multitude of nameless perfections, for which we have neither ideas, words, nor standards, are to us like the consciousness of the glorious sea of mountain tops which are beyond our ken, but which we know to be resting in that furnace of golden light, and adding to the burning splendour which is circumfused over earth, and sea, and sky.

Who can think of self, when he is thus with God? And who can have hard thoughts of His absolute empire and uncontrolled sovereignty, when he is lost, sweetly lost in this complacency, joying over God that He is God, that He is just what He is, and that nothing is wanting to Him? He is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good. What Eli said in sorrow, we may surely say still more in joy. Ah! dear Jesus! how is it we do not cultivate this blessed complacency? It is so full of gladness and of peace, and of self-forgetting, childlike love! Oh teach us to be ever looking over the sea of thine interminable magnificence, and rejoicing that Thou art what Thou art, that Thou hast been thus from unbeginning eternity, and shall be thus, adorably immutable, for never-ending ages! "The soul," says

St. Francis of Sales,* "that exercises the love of complacency, cries perpetually in her sacred silence, It is enough for me that God is God, that His goodness is infinite, that His perfection is immense. Whether I die or live, matters little to me, for my Well-beloved lives eternally with a life all triumphant. Death cannot sadden a heart which knows that its Sovereign Love is living. It is enough for the soul that loves, that He whom it loves more than itself, is heaped with eternal blessings; for such a soul lives more in Him whom it loves than in the body that it animates; for in truth it does not live itself, but its Well-beloved lives in it."

The love of complacency, strictly speaking, is the joy we feel in the infinite perfections of God, that He is what He is. But just as the knowledge of God, by faith, cannot stop at knowledge, but passes into a necessary complacency, and that necessary complacency into free acts of Praise and of Desire; so also this free love of complacency cannot terminate in itself. It passes on to another and a further love, which is called the love of benevolence. Our love of God is just the opposite of God's love of us. He loves us first with a love of benevolence, working in us all the good we have, and then when it is worked, loving us with a love of complacency in His own work within us. But our benevolence toward God is, as St. Francis of Sales points out, merely the natural consequence of our complacency in Him. We first rejoice that He is so good and perfect, and then wish Him, if it were possible, more goodness and perfection; and this last act is the

* Amour de Dieu. v. iii.

love of benevolence. To explain this I will use the words of St. Francis himself.*

"As it is not easy to understand how man can wish any increase of happiness or perfection to God, let us examine how far the love of benevolence we bear Him is a real and solid love. As God is the centre of all good, as His perfections are infinite, and consequently beyond the reach of our desires and thoughts, it is evident that we cannot wish Him, at least with an efficacious desire, any perfection which could add to what He is in Himself. Besides, the object of desire is some future blessing, whereas in God all perfection is present, and so present that it forms one and the same thing with the Divine Essence, which exists from all eternity, and acquires no increase. As we cannot form any real or absolute desire, with regard to God, we form imaginary and conditional wishes. Thou art my God; Thou art so rich in Thyself that Thou needest not my possessions. But if it were possible that there was any thing Thou didst not already possess, I should wish it to Thee, O my God! I should long to procure it for Thee, at the expense of my life. If, being what Thou art, and what thou canst not cease to be, it were possible that some new perfection could be added to those Thou hast already, with what ardour should I desire it were Thine! I should wish that my heart were transformed into desires, and that my life were consumed in sighs. Yes, O Lord! I am far from desiring that we could have room to wish Thee any increase of perfection. My greatest happiness is to think that we cannot add to Thy Sovereign Goodness

* Amour de Dieu. lib. v. 6.

even in desire. But if thou couldst acquire any new advantage, if the desire of seeing Thee more perfect or more happy, chimerical as it is, could be realized, I should wish that my soul were totally transformed into this desire, that my ardour in wishing Thee any perfection which Thou didst not already possess, were as lively as the pleasure I now feel in not being able to desire Thee any thing Thou hast not. How sweet this impotence becomes to me, O my God! when I reflect that it is founded on Thy sovereign, immense, incomprehensible riches, which would be capable of satiating an infinite desire, could it exist, so as to be transformed from desire to infinite enjoyment.

"These desires, though founded on imaginary and impossible suppositions, are very pleasing to God, and are usually formed amid the transports and holy ecstasies of charity. St. Augustine frequently experienced such feelings, and the words in which he expressed them were like so many burning arrows impelled by the hand of love. 'Yes, Lord!' said he, 'I am Augustine and Thou art God; but could it be possible that I were God, and Thou Augustine, I should wish to change conditions with Thee that Thou mightest be God!'* We also testify love of benevolence for the Almighty, when, reflecting that we cannot add any degree to His perfections, which are His infinite and essential immensity, we endeavour to increase in ourselves His accidental greatness, which consists in the complacency we derive from knowing that He is

* Some writers, among whom is Schram, not only deny that St. Augustine ever used these words, but object to them as unsound, and running close upon condemned propositions. Cf. Schram. Myst. Theol.

infinitely perfect, and which increases in proportion as this complacency becomes more ardent. We do not then exercise the love of complacency on account of any pleasure we derive from it, but because it is a source of delight to God. We do not seek our happiness therein as our own happiness, but as conformable to that of God, and thereby calculated to unite us to Him, and procure us the enjoyment of His infinite perfections. To render this union and enjoyment more excellent, we desire to communicate, if it were possible, an infinite strength and boundless extent to complacency. The ever blessed Queen and mother of holy love gives us an example of this, when she says, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord!' To leave no doubt that the ardour of her gratitude derives its increase from complacency, she immediately adds, 'My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.'"

These explanations are sufficient for my purpose. What I want to bring you to is this, just as I have urged you to promote the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the saving of souls, by what is called the love of condolence, or sorrowing for other men's sins, and also by the use of intercessory prayers and thanksgivings, by offering up your own actions to God in union with those of our dear Lord, and also by offering up to Him His own perfections, and the mysteries of Jesus and Mary, the angels and the saints; so now I want you to glorify Him in like manner by those acts of Praise and Desire, which come of these two loves of Complacency and Benevolence. Such are, 1, acts of joy that God is what He is; 2, acts of congratulation with Him on His perfections, His works, and the mysteries of His Sacred Humanity; 3, acts of desire, wish-

ing for Him impossible things, which St. Francis of Sales has just told us are acts of real love, and very acceptable to Him; 4, acts of desire, wishing for Him that He might have had more glory from the world in years gone by, from the lost souls, and the like; 5, acts of desire, which intercession may make efficacious, that He may be more glorified than He is now, through the perfection of the saints and the conversion of sinners, and the more rapid liberation of souls from purgatory; 6, acts of praise, wishing that every sand of the sea and leaf of the woods had an angel's intelligence to praise Him, and offering to Him again and again with loving ardour the actual angelic praise of heaven; and 7, sighs of loving sorrow, condolence, and reparation, over His slighted love, His outraged Majesty, His forgotten goodness, and His defrauded glory. It is true that all these things sound like the breathings of very saints. Yet they need not the austerities which repel us, nor the supernatural powers from which we shrink as much in dismay as in humility. And, as with all the other things recommended in the previous chapters, so with these, how much might we do at such a little cost!

If you look at any of the Saints, you will see that they are made up of six things. First of all, obedience to the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church; secondly, thirdly, and fourthly, strong and loving instincts for the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the salvation of souls; fifthly, an intense love of suffering and voluntary austerities, accompanied by terrific interior trials and, what mystics call, passive purgations of spirit; and sixthly, supernatural states of prayer unusual gifts, and miraculous powers. Now

the first of these things we may put aside, because we must all have it, or else we shall not be saved. The fifth, most likely, we honestly confess we do not feel, and we shrink from it, as well out of humility as out of cowardice; and, as a consequence of this shrinking, we are not quite so blinded by self-love as not to see that the sixth point is far above us, and unsuited to our present attainments. Thus the second, third, and fourth points remain, as something beyond the common necessary practice of the faithful, and below the pinnacles of the saints. These three instincts seem open to us, inasmuch as the austerities which frighten us, and the supernatural heights of prayer which are out of our sight, are not requisite for them. Moreover, which is a singular consolation, the beauty of the saints lies rather in the three instincts that are open to us, than in the two heights to which we dare not aspire.

Now, devout people formed upon the three instincts for the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the welfare of souls, abound in Catholic countries in good times, and seem to be to the Church what the middle classes are to the prosperity of the state,—not its heroes, but its life, strength, muscle, and independence. They are the growth of quiet times. Martyrs can be, and will be made out of them by scores, when troubles come. But saints, the spiritual creations of an interior life, belong to another order of things. It is plain, then, that in uneventful times it is our chief work to increase this middle class of the faithful; otherwise we shall be such dry and uninteresting Christians, that we shall never convert those outside the fold, and, what is even of more importance, we shall have nobody to love our multitudinous poor, or to take any generous, per-

severing pains about them. It is equally obvious that it is the devil's game to lessen the number of this class; and this he does in two ways especially—first, by giving devotion a bad name, inspiring men to call it romantic, enthusiastic, pretty, youthful, the fervour of converts, fanciful, novel, unpractical, and the like; and secondly, by leading people to aim too high, to attempt too much, to affect mystical books, to run after miracles and portents, to make rash vows, and to tempt God by burdening themselves with a multiplicity of prayers: and then, when their wax wings are melted off, in weariness and disgust, they sink down to the merest observance of precepts, and, not seldom, even lower still.

The aim of this treatise is to draw a picture of this middle class, to give a view of their life, to exhibit samples of their devotion, and to make out a case for them. It was mainly this sort of people St. Philip set himself to multiply in Rome, and it is substantially the chief work he left his sons to do. I do not say the exclusive work, else we should lose our right to the crowds of dear sinners that are ever gathering themselves to the odour of the saint's name, and to the lures of his little apostolate. If then you want to be a saint, like to one of the canonized, this is not the book for you. I hope I should never have dreamed of writing it, if it were meant for you. He that has climbed the rocks can alone tell you the secrets of the rough ascent. This is a map of the easy ways of Divine Love, higher than the plains and above their dust, yet not so high as to be beyond the region of sweet flowers and shady trees, and the coolness of bubbling springs. If you have ever read the life of St. Philip, you may remember how some one who wanted to be a saint dreamed that

the holy Father was dragging him through rude and prickly briers. I wish we all had the heart to face the briers; but it is not so, and it is of no use trying to be good by theories. Still, to love God is a great thing, to love Him more and more a greater, and to make others love Him so great that it is a joyous surprise, ever fresh, and new every day, that God should let such as we are do so great a thing.

You must not suppose that I hold cheap the practices of mortification, whether outward or inward, or that I think affective love renders effective love unnecessary, or even that I believe interior mortification can dispense from the obligation of bodily penances and discomforts, in the case of those who are aiming at perfection. My little book is not a summa of ascetical theology. But because we cannot rise so high, there is no need surely to sink so low. Some severe spiritualists speak as if affective love were little better than a delusion, or at best a mere service of hot feelings. Oh surely this is hasty, peremptory, unkind, not like the Church, or God. I grant we must not stop there, that we must go on to mortify our inordinate passions, and work and suffer. Yet surely merely affective love is good as far as it goes; neither can it be with Catholics nothing more than a worship of feelings; for I have shown all along, and theology most amply bears me out, that the practices of it may be made most solid, nay, almost inevitably are so. And then affective love is the way to effective. Besides this, by aiming exclusively at one only, we most commonly lose both. I know there are many people who have made up their minds not to be saints. Well! if God was angry with them, and counted their pusillanimity as sin, if Jesus

turned away from them and left them out of His reckoning, we need take no pains for them. But He does not do so: and therefore we may well affectionately ask them to think, if they will not be saints, whether they will not love our dearest Lord as far as Calvary, without committing themselves to the crucifixion. This will come home to us most feelingly, when our poor ashamed hearts tell us that we ourselves are at least among the well-intentioned faint-hearted cowards of the army of our generous and unselfish Lord.

It is not unfair, though I pretend to be pleading for God's glory and a service of love, to assail you with arguments drawn from your own interests. I am sure many of you are not contented with yourselves. You want to love God more, and to make more of Jesus. You want to get out of your cold, dry, unhandsome way with Him. You would fain have more liberty of spirit, and feel your affections more at large in religion, and be unaffectedly more familiar with the instincts and interests of Heaven. You see that the service of love has common sense on its side, that these half and half measures with God make you neither happy nor holy, and, besides, something in your heart is drawing you closer to God, and winning you to better things. Now look what these acts of Praise and Desire will do for you. They will take the world out of your hearts, and make its pleasures look small and dull to you. They will draw you into quite a different set of ideas and associations, of affections and sympathies. They will make the practice of God's presence as easy to you as it will be delightful. They will settle a host of cases of conscience for you, by raising you at once into a clearer atmosphere, where the doubts and difficulties

in question do not exist. They will make idleness, frivolity, and dissipation intolerable to you, because of the change which they will bring about in your tastes. Beautiful angels were dull to St. Mary Magdalene; for she was seeking Jesus that Easter morning. What were their celestial faces and their dazzling raiment to her? They had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid Him. The gardener, too, as St. Francis sweetly says, reminded her only of flowers, while her head was full of nails and thorns and crosses; yet as he has come in her way, she will out with her one thought, "Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." The three kings hurried through Jerusalem; the court only made them fret; they could rest nowhere but with their star at the crib of Jesus in the cave of Bethlehem. The spouse met the watchmen of the city, and her heart also was on her lips: "Have you seen Him whom my soul loveth?" So these acts of Praise and Desire make new men of us. We are all for heaven. Death even changes its aspect. All things seem easy which are for Jesus, all things welcome which are steps to Him. How differently people feel! When some one told Father Dominic, the Passionist, whose memory is dear to so many of us, that she feared the particular judgment, the tears started into his eyes, and he cried out in his natural way, "Oh, but how sweet to see for the first time the Sacred Humanity of Jesus." This is what Praise and Desire bring us to. We cannot be all we wish on this side the grave. But we can get on toward it by means of love. We can bring matters to this comfortable simplicity of the Spouse, "My beloved to Me, and I to Him, who feedeth among

the lilies till the day break, and the shadows retire."* Yes, there it is! till the day break, and the shadows retire: till the day break, and the shadows retire: till the day break, and the shadows retire!

1. My first example of practices of Praise and Desire shall be taken from no less authoritative a book than the Raccolta of Indulgences. There is in it a chaplet of acts of divine love, indulgenced by Pius VII. in 1818. I will extract some of those which illustrate the present subject. I desire, O my God, to see Thee loved by all. Oh, happy me! if I could give my blood to make all men love Thee. Come, all creatures, and love my God. O my God! that I had a thousand hearts to love Thee with, or that I had the hearts of all men, that I might love Thee with them. Oh, that there were more worlds than there are, that all might love Thee! What a joy it would be! Happy he who could love Thee with the hearts of all possible creatures. I rejoice that the angels and the blessed love Thee in heaven; and I desire to love Thee with all the love wherewith the saints most enamoured of Thee loved Thee, and St. Joseph, and our blessed Lady in each one of her mysteries, and our dearest Lord in each one of His mysteries, and in all the tabernacles where He is now lying hid in the Blessed Sacrament. I would fain love Thee with that very love with which He loves Thee in heaven at this hour, and will love Thee to all eternity; and, last of all, I desire and intend to love Thee with all that love wherewith, O my God! Thou lovest Thyself.

2. The following congratulations are recommended

* Cant. ii. 16, 17.

by Lancisius in his devotions to Jesus Risen.* 1. To congratulate Jesus Risen on the gifts of His glorified Body, and on all He merited by his death, such as His triumphant ascension, royal dignity, and dominion over the whole world, and plenitude of power in heaven and on earth, the supreme headship of the Church, and His judicial office, and other things which we do not know, and which are not enumerated by theologians. 2. To congratulate Him on the manifold fruit of His life, Passion, and death, both among angels and men, and especially all the grace whereby the good angels were confirmed in grace, and all the graces of all kinds, innumerable and indescribable, which men have had, to hinder sin, or to raise them out of sin, or to lift them to perfection, all sacraments and indulgences, and finally, the resurrection of our bodies. It will not be out of place here to mention the particular devotion of Sister Maria Denise, of the Visitation, to her Guardian Angel. It was to congratulate him on the one only fact of his past history of which she had sure knowledge, the grace he received to stand in grace when the angels were falling all round him. 3. To congratulate Him on the innumerable choirs of angels and holy souls in heaven, who adore Him as their supreme Head, the giver and cause of all their graces and honours, and on the divine worship which is paid to Him in heaven and out of heaven, on earth, in purgatory, by masses, churches, images, vows, and all the good works which will ever be done up to the last day. 4. To praise Him for that immense charity by which, as St. Dionysius tells us, He revealed to St. Carpus that

* ii. 90.

He was ready to suffer death over again for the salvation of the human race; and by which also He revealed the same to St. Bridget: "Oh, my friends," said He, "so tenderly do I love My sheep, that rather than be without them, I would, if it were possible, die over again by a special death, equal to the one upon the cross, for each separate one of them!" Another time He said, "Oh, if it were possible, I would, with most eager love, die over again as many times as there are souls in hell!" These things, alas for our stony hearts! help us, by our dearest Lord's (may I say it?) extravagant love of us, to measure our miserable pretence of loving Him!

3. As the acts I am dwelling on are principally interior ones, it will not be out of place to quote St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi's preparation for Whitsuntide. She uttered it in a rapture on Ascension Day. "O Holy Apostles, when the Lord ascended into heaven, He taught you what to do before receiving the Holy Ghost: do you now teach me! O pure John! O amiable Philip! you will not deny me. Tell me what my upper chamber ought to be, and what my interior and exterior operations in these few days. It will be well to build my chamber on high. It shall be the Side of the Word, in which I will dwell in the union of love. What must be my spiritual meat and drink? I will masticate it well, as if with every tooth, and it shall be the consideration of all the operations, great or most humble, of the Incarnate Word while He abode with us. My drink shall be the Blood which flowed from those four fountains of His sacred Hands and Feet; and sometimes I will go to draw of that fountain of many rivulets, His adorable Head. O enamoured

Word! thirty-three years Thou didst abide with us, and I ought to make thirty-three acts of self-annihilation between day and night. And this will be one of my interior operations. Eight days after Thy Nativity Thou didst shed Thy Blood for us, and I ought to make eight examens of conscience in the day; for if the soul is not well examined and cleansed from its defects, it is not fit to shed its blood for Thee, that is, to offer itself to Thee in the act of martyrdom; and, as often as I make this examen of conscience, I will add a renewal of my religious vows. Forty days didst Thou abide upon the earth after the resurrection, and forty times ought I to elevate my mind to Thee between day and night. Seven years wert Thou in Egypt, and seven times a day must I offer to Thee those who lie in the darkness of sin. Forty days didst Thou remain after Thy birth before Thou wert offered in the temple, and forty times a day must I offer myself to Thee to execute Thy good pleasure. My spiritual nourishment will be the daily meditation of Thy most holy Passion joining with it the meditation of that ardent love wherewith Thou wert incarnate, of that humility wherewith Thou didst converse with men, of that gentleness wherewith Thou didst preach, and of that joy wherewith Thou didst listen to the Chananæan and Samaritan woman. She did not ask Thee, but Thou didst invite her to ask. I will meditate also on those words, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; My meat is to do the will of My Father; Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.' Twelve years Thou didst delay, before Thou didst show Thy wisdom; I will make twelve interior acts of love of my neighbour, and twelve more of humility, also interior. Oh how many occa-

sions of these interior acts offer themselves to us, how many captivities of the judgment and the will! Seven times will I adore the Blessed Sacrament, in the room of those who do not do so; seven times, too, will I adore my Christ, who bears His cross with His Head bowed down for all the elect. Thrice will I give particular praise to the most holy Virgin, as mother and special protectress of all religious souls, that she may concur particularly with her assistance to our observation of our religious vows. And as often as opportunity offers will I perform acts of charity to my neighbour, with all possible love and gayety of mind. I will keep an unbroken watch over my senses, and, not to be reputed singular, I will do this at proper times and in proper ways; for, if I never looked at any one, they might think that I was angry with them, and if I never answered them, they would suspect something. Thrice in the day I will remind my sisters of the dignity of our vocation, saying something in praise of it, and I will bear it in mind myself continually. As often as occasion offers, I will console the afflicted, whether their pains be interior or exterior; and at the end of each action, I will endeavour to remain in a continual unbroken act of charity, and of custody of the heart." This devotion is plainly not suitable for all; but it is edifying and instructive for all. For, what a real gain it is, to find out how little we love God, and how shabbily we serve Him! This is one great good of reading the Lives of the Saints. Because a saint is not imitable, it does not follow his life is not practical. Nay, for the most part it is the admirable lives of saints which teach us most humility, and kindle in us greatest love.

4. Under this head will come the custom which prevails in some religious orders of renewing the vows of religion at certain times. This will equally apply to the renewal of any vow by which a devout person may have bound himself to God, or any solemn purpose short of a vow. It is another instance of the artifices of God's love. Just as He allows us to offer to Him the mysteries of Jesus, as if they were our own, so does He allow us to offer to Him our own vows again and again, and thus to multiply His own glory and our merit many times by the same action. We learn from St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi how acceptable this renewal of vows is to God. She says,* "As often as promises made to God are renewed, a renewal of union with God takes place, and the beloved soul acquires more or less union with Him, according to the state of perfection in which it is at the time, and to the degree of charity it has. This renewal, made by the soul interiorly, is a solace to the Holy Trinity, because it is a renewal of the interior complacency of the soul, made with this oblation to God, and always recalling the first pleasure of the first oblation with new complacency and new delight; and it is as grateful to Mary, as if she herself renewed her vow of chastity. It is the glory of the angels, because it is the fulfilling of the holy inspirations which have been sent us by their ministry; and it is also the exultation of the saints, because they see others following their Creator in the same steps wherein they followed Him themselves. It is a solace to the choir of virgins who repeat their new song, seeing that that virtue is increased which they practised

* Vit. c. 118.

with such special affection; and it increases their glory, because as often as this renewal is made, it is as if a feast of the virgins were being celebrated. The soul itself acquires great fruit by it. For all graces are increased in it, all its promises strengthened, a new peace and union begin in it, whose fruit is seen in its conversation and works. Oh, of how great dignity are these vows and promises to God at solemn profession, since the mere renewal of them has such effects, and produces such fruit to the soul! It is not wonderful, therefore, O Word! that they who have light, the order of Thy most Holy Name (Jesuits) should celebrate this renewal as a solemn feast, especially as worldly men make so much of their birthday, or the anniversary of some great dignity. Ah! how much more ought we to celebrate with spiritual feast and jubilee the day on which we were united to God by so strong a chain never to be snapped asunder!" The saint herself used to renew her vows daily, because she regarded them as something divine, and a singular privilege conferred by God on the souls whom He calls into holy religion. She considered them as the "price and treasures of Paradise," and she loved them as the "chains of Divine Love."

St. Francis Xavier used to renew his vows frequently, and said that whenever he did so, he felt his youth renewed as an eagle's; and he often told his brother Jesuits that a daily renewal of their vows was one of the best defences against the attacks and snares of Satan. Lancisius tells us that Father Cerruto, an Italian Jesuit, used to renew his vows mentally three thousand times a day: and one octave of the Epiphany, he completed faithfully the twenty-four thousand times.

So also in the life of the Blessed Alphonso Rodriguez, a Jesuit lay-brother, we read that he used to renew his vows every day, and that this renewal kept him always in a state of fervour. Our Lord signified to Him that this devotion was acceptable to Him, and showed him as well the profit that would come of it to his soul, as the gifts with which He was going to enrich him because of it. One day when he was hearing mass, renewing his vows, and thanking God for his vocation to the Society with great fervour, he was visited with an extraordinary light, which seemed to him to exceed all created light whatsoever. By this light he perceived the magnitude of the blessings which he had received up to this time, his own indignity and misery, and the impossibility of adequately thanking God for them. Feeling his heart filled with a pious shame, he did not dare to look up toward his Benefactor, nor even to open his mouth in thanksgiving, but recollected and abased himself in silence. But God, to whom the prayer of the humble is always pleasing, showed Himself pleased by this new kind of thanksgiving with the silence of the tongue, and said to him with a voice heard by his outward ears, "Alphonso! walk always before Me in this exercising of renewing thy vows, and all things shall turn out well to thee!" This favour threw the humble lay-brother into still greater confusion, and mindful of his own unworthiness, he thought it was a delusion of the devil. But again he heard God speaking, "Alphonso! why dost thou fear? Here is no cause for fear; for there is no delusion in it; do what I bid you!" And at the same time He gave him an interior conviction that all this was from Himself.

Lancisius* relates an anecdote of a man of great prudence and judgment who joined the Society. Every thing in it pleased him except the renewal of vows, which seemed to him a frivolity and impertinence. When the day for the renewal of vows came round, he felt the greatest repugnance in his mind; but mortifying his own judgment and self-love, he made the renewal, though with such confusion, that he hardly knew where he was. God, however, rewarded his obedience. When the priest before whom he had made the renewal, came to him with the Blessed Sacrament to communicate him, he saw our Lord in the Host, and was filled with wonderful consolation, and a light which disclosed to him how acceptable to God was this renewal of vows. Bursting into tears, he perceived his mistake, and the abundance of divine grace continued pouring into him for a long time, so that he was not able to speak.

All this will apply in its measure to the renewal of good purposes and heroic desires. Thomas à Kempis tells us in the Imitation to renew our good purposes every day, and excite ourselves to fervour as if we had only been converted to-day; and Lancisius recommends certain classes of heroic acts and desires, which it would be well for us thus to renew. 1. Acts of humiliation, and our own nothingness. Our Blessed Lord said to St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, "Whenever you make an act of your own nothingness, remember, that as a creature cannot live without a heart, so you cannot live without Me. As long as this knowledge remains in you, you may be sure that you will remain united with

* ii. 2 6.

Me; and My peace shall be with you even while you seem to be waging perpetual war against temptations, which, by My permission, shall assail you, but shall not overcome you; the more sharply they attack you, the more shall my favourable assistance superabound in you, though you shall not feel its presence or its sweetness." Another time He said to Her, "They who serve Me, should do so with such humility as plunges their souls to the centre of the earth; for just as a falling arrow does not rest until it touches the ground, so My Spirit rests only in the soul which it finds in the centre of its own nothingness." Elsewhere God the Father said to her, "The ladder of the words of My Word is loftier than Jacob's ladder, for its foot is in the soul, which, by humility and self-knowledge, is lower even than the abyss in which, by lowly opinion of itself, it plunges, and by the true knowledge of itself it comes even unto My inmost being. And this is the difference between the two ladders, that Jacob's ladder did not reach beyond heaven, nor descend lower than the face of the earth; but this ladder goes beyond the stars, in proportion as the soul humbles itself; nay, it is exalted even to My inmost being, for the soul's humility is its exaltation." 2. Desires and purposes to avoid all deliberate sin and even imperfection: so that with St. Augustine we would rather die than sin, with St. Chrysostom rather see the face of hell than offend God, and with the heroic paradox of the Blessed Alphonso Rodriguez, rather be thrust into hell for no fault at all, than offend God by the very least conceivable venial sin. 3. Desires and purposes to endure all sorts of things for the sake of our dear Lord, such as St. Ignatius puts in the contemplation of the kingdom of Christ in tho

second week of the Exercises, "Behold, O supreme King and Lord of all, I, though most unworthy, yet relying on Thy grace and help, offer myself entirely to Thee, and submit all I have to Thy will, declaring before Thine infinite goodness, and in the sight of the glorious Virgin Thy Mother, and all the heavenly court, that this is my mind, my desire, and my decree, to follow Thee as nearly as I can, and to imitate Thee in bearing insults and adversities with true patience, both interior and exterior. 4. Desires and purposes about the love of our enemies. 5. Desires and purposes to give up all our will and liberty to God, without ever retracting them, and without excepting any thing from the sacrifice.

That these mere desires are, as sacrifices of love, most acceptable to Almighty God, may be seen also from the fact of His so often inspiring His servants with pious designs, which He never intends them to accomplish, as in the case of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, and St. Philip's desire to go to the Indies to preach the Gospel and to shed his blood. The lives of the Saints furnish us with repeated instances of this. Thus it comes to pass that what St. Francis of Sales says is true, that even to wish impossible wishes about God Himself and His perfections is real worship and substantial love, and acceptable to Him. This opens out to us many trains of thought, and if our hearts were what they ought to be, it would open out to us many fountains of loving tears.

While, for the good of our own souls as well as for the glory of God, we take pains to cultivate the spirit of praise in ourselves, we must not forget that in reality it is not so much a virtue of our own as a gift of

God; and so to be sought from Him by special payer. Neither should we omit to claim for this purpose the patronage of St. Gertrude, who was eminent even among the saints for her wonderful spirit of incessant praise. If we could imitate her in this, we might come at length to a participation in her equally wonderful liberty of spirit. How much depends upon this liberty, and how intimately is it connected with a spirit of praise! I wish men could be persuaded to study St. Gertrude more than they do; for most certainly our great defect is the want of liberty of spirit. This is the chief reason why the service of love is comparatively so rare among Christians. Surely, if persons living in the world, and in society, wish to lead a devout life, they should not suppose that a conventual life, diluted and lowered, can be the proper fashion of spirituality for them. From their position and their duties they cannot command their own time, or break up their day into halves and quarters of hours, as if they were in a quiet cloister, and had nothing to do but to follow the chimes of an abbey clock. Hence, in nine cases out of ten, to tell such people that they must draw up a written rule and keep to it; and that the captivity of set times for spiritual drill is their only hope, is as good as telling them that persons living in modern society must not attempt to lead what is called a devout life. How many have given devotion up altogether, because they have tried a rule, and found they could not keep it! How many have leaned their whole weight upon fixed hours and appointed ways of doing things, upon clockwork and over-division, and have broken down, because weak health, or a change of duties, or the interference of a London season have made their fixed hours and

stereotyped ways impossible! If spirituality is made dry, it will never wear. It will crack in a dozen places in a week, like the skin poncho of a Patagonian. People living in the world are sure to put it disdainfully on one side very shortly, and to make themselves at home in a state of low attainments. They have tried spirituality, and it did not answer. It did not last. And so because their own kind of spirituality was a failure, they have no faith in any other kind. It is incredible how soon people can make themselves comfortable in low things. It is as frightening, too, as it is incredible. If it were not for this fatal facility of *settling down*, common sense, honest shame, and reasonable discretion might win the day at last. But this settling down is like the hedgehog policy. Roughness does not hurt it; sweetness cannot win it; and persuasion leaves it as it found it, prickly and imperturbable.

Now, the failure of this regimental kind of holiness, as well as the idea that no other kind is safe or solid, comes entirely from the want of liberty of spirit. Where the law of the Lord is, where the Spirit of Christ is, there is liberty. No one can be at all acquainted with the old-fashioned Benedictine school of spiritual writers, without perceiving and admiring the beautiful liberty of spirit which pervades and possesses their whole mind. It is just what we should expect from an Order of such matured traditions. It were well if we had more reprints and translations of them. St. Gertrude is a fair specimen of them. She is thoroughly Benedictine. There are whole treatises on the spiritual life which people living in the world read through, and feel quite honestly that the method

proposed to them is a bondage which it would be a simple indiscretion for them to attempt. Every young gentleman must be a quasi-seminarist, or give up devotion. Every young lady must be a kind of half nun, without a habit, or she may as well cease to attempt to be any thing better than all the other young ladies round about her. Oh, how all this stands in the way of love, of wise love, of such love as Jesus would have from every one of us! To turn the world into a great lax convent is not the way to further the cause of our dearest Lord. Spiritual postures may create self-righteousness. They are but poor helps to real, unaffected, enduring piety. A spirit of breadth, a spirit of liberty, that is the Catholic spirit; and it was eminently the badge of the old Benedictine ascetics. Modern writers for the most part have tightened things, and have lost by it, instead of gaining. By frightening people they have lessened devotion in extent, and by overstraining they have lowered it in degree.

It is difficult to speak well of liberty of spirit without seeming to recommend negligence, or to countenance unpunctuality, slovenliness, and caprice. But we may safely illustrate the manner from St. Gertrude herself. The following may be taken as specimens of her delightful liberty of spirit. We are told* that she never stayed away from holy communion through fear of the dangers which her spiritual books told her were incurred by those who communicated unworthily. On the contrary, the more keenly she felt her imperfections, the more eagerly she ran to our Blessed Lord, sustained by a lively hope and a zealous love of God.

* Vita. i. 92.

She was excited thereto by a sentiment of humility which caused her to regard as useless, and almost unworthy of consideration, all the good works she could do, and all the practices by which men ordinarily prepare themselves for Communion. On this account, also, she never abstained from Communion, as many people do, when she happened not to have gone through her ordinary exercises, esteeming all the efforts of human devotion in comparison of the free gift which is given us in the Holy Eucharist, as a single drop of water to the vastness of the sea. Thus, without too great an attachment to any of her particular preparations, she leaned upon the infinite condescension of God, and cared only to receive that august Sacrament into a loving heart.

On one occasion, when she was travelling, she fell by some accident from a dangerous height. Full of joy, she cried out, "Oh, my sweet Saviour! what a blessing it would have been for me, if this fall had shortened my road to Thee!" Some of her companions were a little scandalized at this, and asked her if she was not afraid of dying without the sacraments. "I should wish from the bottom of my heart," she answered, "to be fortified by the sacraments before I die; but I have the hardihood to prefer the providence of my Lord and my God to all sacraments, and I think this the worthiest preparation for death. It is a matter of indifference to me whether my death be slow or sudden, provided it be agreeable in the sight of Him to whom I trust it will conduct me. For I hope, however I die, to find the mercy of God, without which I shall be lost eternally, no matter how long a preparation I may have made for death."

A pious person had prayed for a long time for some particular grace, and God had never answered her prayers, at which she fell into a state of dangerous discouragement. At last God said to her, "I have delayed answering you, because you have not sufficient confidence in the effects which My mercy produces in you. You should imitate My chosen virgin, Gertrude, who takes her stand so firmly upon My providence, that there is nothing she does not hope from the plentitude of My grace; and hence it is that I can never refuse her any thing she asks."

Another characteristic exhibition of her spirit is to be found in the following custom. She never would choose her habits, or any thing else in which choice was offered her, but she shut her eyes, put out her hand, and took what she first touched. Then when she had taken it, she immediately became attached to it, as a present which had come to her from God's own hand, and she conceived quite an affection for it, and was no longer indifferent about it. Think a little of this. There is that in it which may correct stiffness, and rearrange our ideas of holy indifference.

Here is a picture of Gertrude's life. One day, when St. Matilda was singing in choir, she saw Jesus sitting upon a lofty throne, and Gertrude walking up and down before Him, without ever taking her eyes off His face, whichever way she walked, and at the same time she seemed busily occupied with a host of exterior duties. While Matilda was gazing in astonishment on the vision, she heard our Lord say, "This is the image of the life which My dear Gertrude leads before My eyes. She walks always in My presence. She allows no rest to her desires, no truce to her anxieties, to find

out what is nearest and dearest to My heart; and as soon as she has discovered it, she executes it with care and fidelity. But the great thing is that she does not rest upon it, but is off again, always seeking some new thing in My will, in order to redouble her zeal by new actions and fresh practices of virtue. And thus her whole life is nothing but a linked chain of praises consecrated to My honour and glory." St. Matilda thought at once of the besetting infirmity of active and zealous piety; for she had seen it, so she believed, in her dear Gertrude; and she ventured to say, "But, Lord! if Gertrude's life is so perfect, how is it she cannot bear the defects of others, and exaggerates them so much?" Our Lord, with admirable sweetness, replied, "It is because she cannot bear the least stain on her own heart, that she feels so keenly the failings of her neighbours!" Nearly a volume of spiritual commentary might be written upon this.

Once more: let us listen to the testimony of God Himself. A holy man pressed God in prayer to reveal to him what it was in which His Divine Majesty took so much pleasure in His beloved Gertrude. God vouchsafed to reply that it was her liberty of heart. The holy man having esteemed the excellence of this gift much less than it deserved, answered in surprise: "And I, Lord, thought that what pleased Thee most in her soul, was her perfect knowledge of herself, and the great love to which, by Thy grace, she has attained." "It is true," replied our Lord, "that those are two great perfections; but this liberty of heart implies both of them, and it is a precious gift, and a good so perfect that it is enough to raise a soul to the summit of perfection. It is this which disposes the heart of Ger-

trude to receive every moment of her life some new favours; and it is this which hinders her heart from attaching itself to any thing which can displease Me, or dispute with Me the empire of her love."

Such was the Saint, the special saint of praise and of devout desires! Oh that she could be in the Church once more, as she was in ages past, the doctress and the prophetess of the interior life, like Debbora, who sat beneath her palm in Mount Ephraim, uttering her canticles and judging Israel.

Having said so much of the failure of persons who live in the world and aim at devotion, I cannot refrain, though it is not necessarily connected with my subject, from adding a few words more. Since God sealed up the garden of Eden, and hid it from our curious approach, it is said that there has been nothing so like a paradise on earth as a Jesuit novitiate. The world, alas! cannot be turned into this. In it men must try to lead angelic lives, but still, not in the tranquil, saint-infected air of Sant' Andrea, but with all the distractions of noisy life around them. To make a cloister about us in the world, is to enclose the world along with us in our cells, and not to see the suspicious companion we have got. Thus trying to lead the lives of religious in the world, by a sort of spurious adaptation of monasticism to the world's circumstances, is one reason why so many good people fail in trying to be better.

But there is another reason too. The contemplative life is one thing, and the active life another, and each has its own retinue and appurtenances; and consistency is the secret of success. Now, except a few, a very few singular vocations, devout people living in

the world are called, as living in the world, to an active life. Yet here is a mistake into which they constantly fall. They make their spirituality to be all interior, while the whole of their active life is for the world, and essentially worldly, just like methodists, who keep Sunday for religion, and the week-days for the world. These good people have no Christian active life, and so the prayers and the church-goings will not keep the peace with the parks and the parties, and at last devotion gets the worst of it, and signs away its rights in a base concordat. In other words, dear reader! I suspect,—I only say suspect, for I have no right to any thing beyond a suspicion in spiritual science,—I repeat, I suspect that we can have no devout lives in the world without some active tending of the poor! Visiting the sick, looking after schools, attending hospitals, having to do with penitents and foundlings, emigrants and soup-kitchens, I suspect the secret of perfection in the world, and of perseverance in devotion in the world, lies in these things. To live interior contemplative lives in the world for three hours a day is a glorious thing. But you see, unluckily, it hardly ever lasts. What now, if it really be that I am right, and that the reason of the failure is, that to give all your interior life to God, and all your exterior life to the world, is an unlawful division; and that, if the rich are to be holy, they must either strip themselves of their riches, and hide themselves behind a convent grille, or they must labour with their own hands for those below them, and make themselves companions of the poor?

You see your Christian life is made up of mass, communion, meditation, examen, some little austerities, and the like. But all this is more or less contemplative, so

long as it stands by itself. It is all most excellent. But you are called to something additional, to an active Christian life, to the apostolate of the rich, which consists in assiduous and affectionate works of mercy for the poor. Look abroad into Catholic countries, where the middle class of holy people so abounds, and is so fruitful of good works, and so graceful in its spiritual beauty. It looks as if the secret there was in this glorious activity for the poor. When you come from prayer, or from church, you cannot without singularity carry your outward recollection into company, and somehow, prayer is like a delicate bloom upon the soul; the hot air of the world's rooms dissipates it speedily. But if you come from the garret or the hospital, the workhouse or the cellar, you have a charmed atmosphere around you, which is a sort of panoply of paradise, from which the venomous arrows of the world glance off blunted and innocuous. It wears well. It cannot be smiled away, or talked of, or gossipped to pieces, like the exotic bloom of prayer. Everywhere, where the world is, there is danger to the soul; but the gayety, the pleasure, or the fashion can hardly be named, which active mercy to the poor cannot disarm of all its perils, and even sanctify. Depend upon it, with you who live in the world, mercy is but another word for perseverance, and the touch of the poor the Real Presence of your Lord.

What a wonder it is that God should love men! Intrinsically, what is there in them to love? If we compare our own natural gifts with those of an angel, how miserable we appear! If we consider how much more faithfully the beasts answer the end of their creation than we do, of what shall we be proud? Moreover,

God has tried men over and over again, and they have always failed Him, and failed Him with every circumstance of unamiable selfishness which can be conceived. There was, first of all, Paradise and the Fall. Every one knows what came of it. God was matched against an apple, and the apple carried it. The Flood was an awful judgment; but mercy went along with it. Yet we soon find the knowledge of God almost confined to one family, and one line of Patriarchs. Then came the Jews. Job's patience is hardly a picture of God's long-suffering with His people. He rewarded, and they despised Him. He punished, and they hardened their hearts. He sent them His Son, and they crucified Him; and the Romans had to go and take away their place and nation, and burn up their city and temple. Then here is the world since the Crucifixion. Tc look at it you would say that our dearest Lord's Passion had been a simple failure. So little is the face of the world, or the tone of the world, or the ways of the world changed. The results of the gospel on the world seem to be, first a tinge of unusual romance in its history, and secondly, a great number of new words brought into its various languages to express the phenomena and genius of the Incarnation. Can anybody say that much else has come of it, looking at the world at large? Then here are we Christians, a most unsatisfactory sight indeed! How do we treat our sacraments? How many of us are serving our Crucified Lord generously and out of love? Verily, God's love of men is a simple wonder. Yet how He must love them, seeing that He became not an angel for angels, but He did become a man for men! There is no other account of the matter, than the Scripture account of it.

It is simply one of the mysteries of the character of God, as the Eternal Wisdom says of Himself.* "I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not yet, and I was conceived; neither had the fountains of water as yet sprung out. The mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established. Before the hills I was brought forth. He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was present; when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths, when He established the sky above, and poised the fountains of the waters, when he balanced the foundations of the earth. I was with Him forming all things and was delighted every day, playing before Him at all times, playing in the world, and My delights were to be with the children of men!"

But it is a greater wonder still that He lets men love Him. Where are the words to tell the privilege which it is to love the incomprehensibly beautiful, infinitely good, and immensely holy God? One would have thought such love as ours would be but an insolent profanation; and that were we allowed to be before God with such instinctive love as that of the patient cattle or the drinking birds, it would have been honour enough for us. Yet if, by permission of His inexhaustible compassions, we might love Him, then surely it must be by blood, and pain, and suffering, and shame, and penance, and the costly offerings of a terrific austerity, and an appalling self-sacrifice. Ah! dearest Lord God! and so, in truth, it is; but the blood and

* Prov. viii.

the pain, the suffering and the shame, are not ours, but His own! He weeps that we may smile; He bleeds that we may be whole; He is put to shame, that we may be glad and joyful; He is afraid, and anxious, and heavy, and sweating blood, that we may be at ease about our past sins, drinking in the sunshine of the earth, familiar with God, and sweetly confident about eternity. So far does He go, that not only may we love Him most earnestly, but He has arranged all things to entice us into love. He coins our very desires into worship; and He lets us love Him, and glorify Him, and earn glory for ourselves by what would almost provoke a smile, from an unbeliever, it looks so like a mere make-believe, the artifice of a good-natured father, a very child's play of love. If all this on earth, what will He be, what will He do in heaven? Isaias and St. Paul have both told us how useless the inquiry is. We must have other eyes to see it with, other ears to hear it with, and a far other range of thought to compass it and take it in. And will all this one day be ours? By the Blood of our sweet Jesus, we trust undoubtingly it will. And what ever have we done for it? Where is the proportion between it and our deserts? There is none, none, none. It is all because of Jesus. Jesus is the secret of every thing. Jesus is the interpretation of all the secrets of God. What a religion is this! and what a God! Oh let it be told to every inhabitant of the earth that it is not as he thought it must be. We may all love God as much as ever we please, and in as many ways as we can think of. Would that angels might proclaim it every hour of the day and night, with the sound of the trumpet, to all the dwellings in the four quarters of the world! If,

when they hear it, they neglect their worldly interests, and become like the men of Galilee, gazers into heaven, it is only what we might expect. Infinite permission to love! Infinite permission to love! There is the creature's charter. The blood of a God bought it. What a religion! What a God!

Do wonders end here? No! there is a greater still. It was passing wonder that God should love men. It was more marvellous that He should let men love Him. But man can outdo God; for his is the greatest wonder of all; it is that he does not love God when he may. This is hardly to be believed, though we see it. Oh, if we were not hardened by custom to this fact, it would breed in us some such horror as a cruel and savage parricide would do. It would take our breath away. We should not know what to make of it. Belief in it would only grow slowly into us, and would stupefy us as it grew. But to forget God is the order of things, and we hardly notice the phenomenon at all. Alas! if we could see it altogether as faith would have us see it, we should long for tears of blood to wash away our infamy! And what can be said to make men love God, which is one half as strong as what God has actually done for them? His mercy is so eloquent, His bounty so touching, His indulgence so persuasive, that if He has failed to win, why need men trouble themselves to proclaim His love? This is what St. Paul must have meant when he talked about the foolishness of preaching. Christ crucified was Himself the sermon and the preacher, what need of more? It was foolishness. Only in His love again God let us do this; we are always meeting love and running against it at every turn; He allowed us to take the words of His covenant into

our mouths, and show our little love of Him by telling others His great love of us. And He showed His love again by letting the conquest of the world depend upon this foolishness of preaching. But you and I love Him! Well! and this is another wonder; for how come we to do so, when so many more around us do not? It is simply His own gift, simply grace. Here is Jesus again. He taught us how to love, and seeing what unapt pupils we were, He took some of His own love out of His Sacred Heart, and put it into ours, that we might love God with it. And all our share in the matter is that we have left the lamp untrimmed, and caused the fire to burn far duller than it did before. It almost seems as if He purposely chose those who were least capable of loving Him. You and I must surely feel this. We could point to scores who do not love Him; and yet are a thousand times nobler and more generous of heart than we are, and would have made far finer characters.

How miserable we are! Why did not God call other souls out of nothing that would have loved Him gloriously, and not been the mean things that we are? He loved us, our souls, ourselves. He chose us with an eternal choice, gave us an eternal preference, and loved us with an everlasting love. Why? There is no answering the question. Simply, He loved us, and so He chose us. Then what are we to do with this world, which will not love God? Ah! there is the question. We may well have our heads and hearts full of all manner of wild heroic schemes for His love and honour. But it chafes us. What *can* we do? What is the nearest thing to infinite which we can attempt? How can we be in all quarters of the world at once? Here

is an answer; not equal to the necessity, I admit; still it is an answer. By love and the spirit of reparation.

Oh, for the love of Jesus, do something! Can you see Divine Love begging from heart to heart, and not be touched by the piteousness of His poverty! There is no medicant on earth so spurned as He who made it of old, and supports it now. Make one heart give Him an alms, in honour of the Father; make reparation for another heart's denial, in honour of the Son; and grow in love yourself, in honour of the Holy Ghost. Do we not see that a man hardly ever makes up his mind to a thing, but he does it? Few men miss their end when they are obstinately bent on gaining it. I wonder what would take place, if a few of us would do this, if we were to say resolutely, I am determined to have God better loved in the world. I will not come into the world for nothing. Somebody shall love God the more for my having been created. If it be ever so little, Divine Love shall have been increased in the world by me. Have we ever made such a determination? Let us make it now. I have huge faith in it. When do we begin? To-day. Very well. Now we have a definite work before us, a work which *shall* be done. Dear Majesty of God! By the Heart of Jesus, we will do something great and generous for Thee!

It would be a waste of words to show how the practice of Praise and Desire would assist us here, both in increasing our own love of God, and making reparation to Him for others' want of love. But when we have done all, it seems so little, that we may well fall back upon our doctrine and practice of oblation, in order to supply for our deficiency. Where do we naturally turn? To Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God, to

her who was not only conceived without sin, but was never so much as included in the decree which concerned sin. We should never know God as well as we do, if it were not for Mary. She reflects upon us the magnificence of God. Her dignity is the highest that can be, and St. Thomas tells us, even within the compass of omnipotence. She is a trophy of Divine Love, whereon the Three Blessed Persons have hung all their gifts and prerogatives which a mere creature is capable of receiving. She is clad from head to foot in the surpassing beauty of God. He has communicated Himself to her in a manner which we dare not put into words. The Church calls her by names that startle us, as if she had borrowed the titles of the Most High, and claimed common property in His attributes. We are bidden to speak of her in words which seem to belong to the Eternal Uncreated Wisdom of the Father. The Son has transferred to the Mother what is His. She is more than all creation beside, more worthy, more beautiful, more mighty, more loved of God. Thus she is before God the unspeakable "hymn which befits Him in Sion." She is all praise, all thanksgiving. She is the repose of the Creator's merciful complacency, the plenitude of His delighted benediction. With her He is well pleased. Thus is Mary's praise an almost boundless worship which we can offer to Him. In old times the servants of God made their Benedicite of seas and mountains, birds and fishes, heat and cold, wells and green things, cattle and men. They called upon them all to praise, exalt, and superexalt the glory of the good Creator. But Mary is the Christian's Benedicite. The Church teaches us to thank in strains of ardent love the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity for

the gifts and graces of Mary, and has indulgenced several devotions to this effect. See what this implies. Enter into the Spirit of the Church. Remember, Mary is the Christian's Benedicite.

Sweet praise of Mary! Can any thing go beyond it? Dear Mother, what a joy to us to know thou art such praise to God! Sweet praise, beautiful praise, the praise of the sinless! Can any thing go beyond it? Yes! Mother! and none knoweth this so well as thou dost! There was* a cedar in Libanus, with fair branches, and full of leaves, of a high stature, and his top was elevated among the thick boughs. The waters nourished him, the deep set him up on high; the streams thereof ran round about his roots, and it sent forth its rivulets to all the trees of the country. Therefore was his height exalted above all the trees of the the country, and his branches were multiplied, and his boughs were elevated because of many waters. And when he had spread forth his shadow, all the fowls of the air made their nests in his boughs, and all the beasts of the forest brought forth their young under his branches, and the assembly of many nations dwelt under his shadow. And he was most beautiful for his greatness, and for the spreading of his branches; for his root was near great waters. The cedars in the paradise of God were not higher than he; the fir-trees did not equal his top, neither were the plane-trees to be compared with him for branches. No trees in the paradise of God were like him in his beauty. See how sweetly the prophet speaks of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. It is to Him incomparably more than to our

* Ezekiel xxxi.

dearest Mother that the Father saith, "Show Me Thy face; let Thy voice sound in My ears; for Thy voice is sweet, and Thy face comely."* And, oh, the glory of Mary! His voice sounds like hers, and His face wears the lineaments of hers! But who can tell the praise the voice of Jesus utters to the Majesty of God? When an angel sang but a moment to St. Francis, the saint felt he must have died of sweetness, had the music been prolonged an instant more; what then must be the voice of our Lord's most dear Humanity? Oh, what a joy it is to kneel in silent praise, hushed with the sweet thought of all that divine, unutterable praise which the voice of Jesus is uttering to God! Oh, the consolation that God is now at least receiving praise, the value of which is infinite, because of the blessed union of the Word with that Sacred Humanity!

But saints alone can rightly speak of these things. Let it be St. Francis of Sales.† "When we have listened to the united praises which all creatures render their Creator, and then hear the homage and benediction of the Eternal Son, we discover therein an infinite value and worth. We wake as if from a profound sleep, and enchanted by the magical sounds of this heavenly music, we exclaim, 'It is the voice of the sovereign object of my love which strikes my ears; in comparison of this one voice, the harmony of all others is but a melancholy silence!‡ Behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills;' that is, elevating far above the benedictions of all creatures the homage He renders His Eternal Father. His all-seeing eye penetrates more deeply than any other

* Cant. ii. 14. † Amour de Dieu, v. xi. ‡ Cant. ii. 8.

the infinite, uncreated beauty of the Divine Object He desires to glorify. The features which mark His boundless love are thus described in the Canticles: Behold, He standeth behind our wall, and clothes Himself with His Sacred Humanity. He renders himself visible through His wounds and bleeding side, looking through these apertures as through the windows and through the lattices. We may consider divine love residing in the heart of our Redeemer as a sovereign seated on his throne. Through His wounded side it beholds the hearts of the children of men, never losing sight of them. As those who look through a lattice see without being seen, so the love of this Divine Heart, which may be called the Heart of Divine love, being in reality its centre, incessantly considers all that passes in ours. As for us, we do not see Jesus Christ distinctly; we merely catch a glimpse of Him, for could we behold Him as He is in Himself, mortal beings as we are, we should expire for love of that infinite goodness which prompted Him to die for love of us, and which would induce Him to sacrifice His life for us again, if He were still liable to mortality. Could we hear the canticle which this Divine Heart sings in honour of the Father, we should endeavour to burst our ties and soar to heaven, that we might listen to it for ever. This God of charity does not deprive us of this advantage. He invites us to unite ourselves to Him, saying, 'Arise, make haste to fly to Me, My love, My dove, my beautiful one.'* Come to this heavenly abode, where every thing breathes supereminent bliss, where nothing is heard but canticles of benediction and notes of joy.

* Cant. ii. 10.

The melancholy turtle-dove here changes her lamentations to the sweet strains of happiness. Come then, My love, My beautiful one, behold Me through My wounds; they are the lattices through which I see you. My dove in the clefts of the rock, come and contemplate My heart through the opening in My bleeding side, made when My house was so piteously ruined on the cross. Come and show thy face. Let thy voice sound in My ears. Let it be united to Mine, and then thy voice will be sweet, and thy face comely. What transports of delight shall we not experience, when our voices, mingling with and made one with our Saviour's, shall share in the infinite sweetness of those praises which the well-beloved Son renders to His Eternal Father."

Can the Majesty of God need more than this? Shall not the aspirations of our wildest flights of love repose delighted and contented here? No! not even here, not even with the praise of our dearest Lord's Sacred Humanity. Love can still draw a distinction. The human actions of Jesus, such as this sweet praise, have indeed an infinite value, because of His Divine Person. But they are not infinite in themselves. Here then is something in the praise which falls short of the Majesty it praises. We must mount higher still, until we rest in that perfect, infinite, sovereign praise, which the Divinity offers to Himself. O my God! I bless Thee that Thou art so great that neither Mary, nor even the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, can praise Thee as Thou shouldest be praised; and I bless Thee too for that infinite, incessant, sufficient praise of Thine own self, the thought of which by Thy grace is my greatest contentment upon earth!

But we must again call in a saint to speak. He

shall sum up all I have tried to say of Praise and of Desire, of Complacency and of Benevolence.* "Who can comprehend the sentiments of joy and complacency which animate a soul, when she sees that God is infinitely glorified by the praise He gives Himself? But this complacency gives birth to a new desire. We long to glorify God for the power He possesses of worthily honouring himself. We wish to annihilate our whole being to return Him thanks for it. We call anew to our assistance all creatures to bless Him, because He gives Himself an infinite glory which He can only receive from Himself. Thus, pleasure at seeing God worthily praised, and an incessantly increasing desire to glorify Him, keep the heart, as it were, suspended between complacency and benevolence. It is continually wavering between these two sentiments, and always penetrating more deeply into the exhaustless sweets of love. It then reunites all its powers to praise God, and to thank Him that He can only be adequately glorified by Himself. For though the devout soul, in the first ardent effusions of her love, aspired to nothing less than to offer her God a homage worthy of His greatness, she afterward acknowledges that she had deceived herself, and declares that she would regret possessing the power to praise Him worthily. She prefers to all her desires the humble feeling of complacency, which she derives from seeing that God whom alone she loves, being infinitely worthy of homage, must be extolled in an infinite manner, in order to be praised as He deserves, and that He can only be thus glorified by Himself. After

* St. Francis, Amour de Dieu, v. cap. ult.

this avowal, the heart, unable to proceed, can only admire, and say with the prophet, 'A hymn, O God, becometh Thee in Sion!' Isaias represents the seraphim, singing over and over again the same canticle, with their face and feet vailed, to show that they can neither know God perfectly, nor serve Him worthily. Feet, which support man, mark actions and services. However, notwithstanding their impotence which they unhesitatingly acknowledge, they always fly by the help of two wings; that is, the sentiments of complacency and benevolence keep them in continual motion. But this motion is not accompanied with agitation or disquietude, and is perfectly consistent with the calm and peaceful love by which they repose in God.

"The human heart is always agitated, when the movement by which it is incessantly dilated and compressed happens to be restrained; and it is most tranquil when this movement meets with no obstacle or resistance. In other words, its peace and calm depend on its movement. So it is with the seraphim and all who love God. Their love finds repose in the double and incessant movement of complacency and benevolence. By the first they attract, and, if we may use the expression, restrain the Almighty within the limits of their heart. By the second, they dilate their hearts in God. In this state, a heart inflamed with love, though perfectly tranquil, still experiences two kinds of movement. It desires to see the wonderful effects of God's infinite goodness, and then it wishes to render Him a worthy homage. But these two desires are the two wings which the seraphim cannot use. One they fold on their face, as if to acknowledge that God is infinite and beyond the reach of their comprehension.

The other they fold on their feet, as if to express that they can do nothing worthy of the greatness and majesty of God. Love, then, retains only two wings of complacency and benevolence, which it employs to soar to the bosom of God, to absorb and engulf itself more and more deeply in the fathomless abyss of His infinite perfections."

Ah! dearest Lord! why is it we think of any thing but this? Why is it the world does not always seem little to us, as at this hour, and life a weariness, and death a gain? Why do our hearts leap up at other things besides the thought of God? Why art not Thou our only sweetness, who art, as we have ever found Thee, so passing sweet? Why art Thou not our only rest, our choicest recreation, who art our Father, Brother, and our God? Why wilt Thou not take pity on our helplessness, and Touch us with Thy fire, and make us serve Thee out of love? Ah! Jesus, we shall have reason to complain of Thee for being so lovely, if Thou wilt not give us love!

CHAPTER IX.

Purgatory.

IT is incredible how dear the glory of God becomes to those who are continually on the lookout for it. The very search gives them new senses whereby they can find it, while daily increasing love is perpetually sharpening their discernment. "The earth is full of Thy glory." What a joy to a loving heart! But it is not enough that heaven has overflowed, and that earth is filled with the blessed inundation of His glory. We would fain there should not be a nook of creation which is not full of it. Yet there is one place where that glory seems frustrated, one place from which there rises neither plaint of prayer, nor joy of praise, nor blessing of thanks, nor aspiration of desire. It is the home of those who have had their trial and lost their cause, and with it have lost God for ever. Here is grace which has not borne fruit, or whose fruits have rotted upon the tree. Here are sacraments which have come to nought. The cross has

been a failure, and God's loving purposes have been successfully resisted and direfully overthrown. Yet it is of faith that God's harvest of glory out of that unutterable gloom is immense, for the lost soul is as much an unwilling worship of His justice, as the converted soul is a willing worship of His love. Neither is Jesus without His own interests there; for the pains, unspeakable as they are, nay, even in the bare thought of them intolerable, are less than the merit of sin, less than the righteous measure of punishment, and are so because of Him. The Precious Blood, in some sense, has reached even there. Neither is that horrible place without a most blessed result on the salvation of many souls, through the holy and salutary fear which it breeds in them, and the loose and low notions of God which it corrects in the unthinking. When our Lord showed Sister Francesca of the Blessed Sacrament, a Spanish Carmelitess, the loss of a soul, and several times in a vision compelled her positively to study the separate tortures of that place, He upbraided her for weeping: "Francesca! why weepest thou?" She fell prostrate at His sacred feet, and said, "Lord! for the damnation of that soul, and the manner in which it has been damned." He vouchsafed to reply, "Daughter! it hath chosen to damn itself; I have given it many helps of grace that it might be saved, but it would not profit by them. I am pleased with your compassion, but I would have you rather love My justice." And another time, when she was compelled to fix her gaze upon those pains, the angels said to her, "O Francesca! strive hard after the holy fear of God!" Who can doubt that there are at this hour thousands and tens of thousands in the bliss of heaven, who never would

have been there if there had been no hell. Alas for the reproach it is to the unloving hearts of men! but after all, the Cross of Christ has had no better help on earth than the unbearable fire of hell.

Verily it is well for our own sakes, to think sometimes of that horrid place! As truly as fair France lies across the Channel, as truly as the sun is shining on the white walls, and gay bridges, and bright gardens, and many-storied palaces of its beautiful capital, as truly as that thousands of men and women there are, living real lives and fulfilling various destinies, so truly is there such a place as hell, all alive this hour with the multitudinous life of countless agonies, and innumerable gradations of despair. Save the blessed in heaven, none live so keen or conscious a life as those millions of ruined souls. It is not impossible that we may go there too. It is not impossible that we may have sent some there already. When we pass along the streets, we must often see those who will inhabit there for ever. There are some there now, who were not there an hour ago. There are some now in the green fields, or in the busy towns, on comfortable beds, or on the sunshiny seas, who in another hour perhaps will have gone there. This is a dreadfully real truth.

But what if more than all this be true? What if there was once a day when we should have gone thither if we had died? What if this hour it holds mere boys and girls, who have sinned far less than we have done, nay, perhaps, have sinned but once, while we have sinned a thousand times? Oh, but we may humble ourselves still more. How long should we persevere in serving God, if we were certified there

was no hell? Should we have left our sins, if it had not been for hell? Oh, what a thing it is to be upon this good earth, and surrounded by all this hopeful life, when we have actually by our own hand and eye, word and thought, and evil painstaking, worked out our right and title to all this everlasting wo. Ah! just as the mist rises from the barren sea, where the corn grows not and the vines can bear no fruit, and forms the clouds which are to fall in fertilizing showers over hill and dale, so from those broad seas of fire and curse, the Divine Compassion rises like a cloud, to pour down streams of grace upon the souls of living men. Let no one ever turn away from the sight of hell, lest, by little and by little and by very little, a good opinion of himself should grow up within his soul, and send him to that drear banishment at last. Indeed it is good, very good, to think of hell, and of that kind wonder, that we are not already there this hour. Nay, do not start,—what you see is indeed the white light of earth's sun; fear not; that sound,—it is the wind that waves the branches of the wood; be assured; your eyes do not deceive you, those are the village spires that are sleeping in the misty, quiet landscape; all is right so far. We are here, and we are free; but we ought to have been,—there, and slaves!

But if we give ourselves up to seek and find God's glory, and to make this our one occupation upon earth, must we go down to hell, and learn to rejoice with those awful attributes of God which are satisfied with that terrific sacrifice? No! God be praised! this is no part of our devotion. We are creatures of hope and love. We go where God's glory is possible to us, where we can help it, and advance its interests; or if

we rise into the impossible, it is only that love has carried us away into the silent eloquence of childlike extravagant desire. We have nothing to do with hell. We have seen that of our three things, the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the salvation of souls, the two first may be found even there. But they are not there in ways which concern us; so reflections upon hell are not necessary to my plan. Enough for us that there is such a place, and that at this hour it is full of souls, and that more and more are ever streaming into it, and that its frightful occupations are what they are, and that there is not one of us who is not running a risk, or of whom it is not possible, that that place may be his heritage and portion for ever. They who serve Jesus out of love do not on that account forget these things. Nay, they remember them the more, because they love so much.

But although we are mercifully freed from the necessity of descending into hell to seek and promote the interests of Jesus, it is far from being so with purgatory. If heaven and earth are full of the glory of God, so also is that most melancholy, yet most interesting land, where the prisoners of hope are detained by their Saviour's loving justice from the Beatific Vision; and if we can advance the interests of Jesus on earth and in heaven, I may almost venture to say that we can do still more in purgatory. And what I am endeavouring to show you in this treatise, is, how you may help God by prayer, and the practices of devotion, whatever your occupation and calling may be; and all these practices apply especially to purgatory. For although some theologians say, that in spite of the holy souls placing no obstacle in the way, still the effect of

prayer for them is not infallible, nevertheless it is much more certain than the effect of prayer for the conversion of sinners upon earth, where it is so often frustrated by their perversity and evil dispositions. Anyhow what I have wanted to show has been this, that each of us, without aiming beyond our grace, without austerities for which we have not courage, without supernatural gifts to which we lay no claim, may by simple affectionateness and the practices of sound catholic devotion do great things, things so great that they seem incredible, for the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the good of souls. I should therefore be leaving my subject very incomplete if I did not consider at some length devotion to the Holy Souls in Purgatory; and I will treat, not so much of particular practices of it, which are to be found in the ordinary manuals, as of the spirit of the devotion itself.

Rosignoli, in his Wonders of God in Purgatory,* which he wrote at the request of the Blessed Sebastian Valfré, of the Turin Oratory, relates from the Dominican annals an interesting dispute between two good friars as to the respective merits of devotion for the conversion of sinners and devotion for the Holy Souls. Fra. Bertrando, was the great advocate of poor sinners, constantly said mass for them, and offered up all his prayers and penances to obtain for them the grace of conversion. "Sinners," he said, "without grace are in a state of perdition. Evil spirits are continually laying snares for them, to deprive them of the Beatific Vision, and to carry them off to eternal tor-

* Opere i. 710.

ments. Our Blessed Lord came down from heaven, and died a most painful death for them. What can be a higher work than to imitate Him, and to co-operate with Him in the salvation of souls? When a soul is lost, the price of its redemption is lost also. Now the souls in purgatory are safe. They are sure of their eternal salvation. It is most true that they are plunged into a sea of sorrows; but they are sure to come out at last. They are the friends of God; whereas sinners are His enemies, and to be God's enemy is the greatest misery in creation."

Fra. Benedetto was an equally enthusiastic advocate of the suffering souls. He offered all his free masses for them, as well as his prayers and penances. "Sinners," he said, "were bound with the chains of their own will. They could leave off sinning if they pleased. The yoke was of their own choosing. Whereas, the dead were tied hand and foot against their own will in the most atrocious sufferings. 'Now come, dear Fra. Bertrando, tell me—Suppose there were two beggars, one well and strong, who could use his hands, and work if he liked, but chose to suffer poverty rather than part with the sweets of idleness; and the other sick, and maimed, and helpless, who, in his piteous condition, could do nothing but supplicate help with cries and tears,—which of the two would deserve compassion most, especially if the sick one was suffering the most intolerable agonies?' Now this is just the case between sinners and the Holy Souls. These last are suffering an excruciating martyrdom, and they have no means of helping themselves. It is true they have deserved these pains for their sins; but they are now already cleansed from those sins. They must have

returned to the grace of God before they died, else they would not have been saved. They are now most dear, inexpressibly dear, to God; and surely charity, well-ordered, must follow the wise love of the Divine Will, and love most what He loves most."

Fra. Bertrando however would not give way, though he did not quite see a satisfactory answer to his friend's objection. But the night following he had an apparition which it seems so convinced him, that from that time he changed his practice, and offered up all his masses, prayers, and penances, for the Holy Souls. It would appear as if the authority of St. Thomas might be quoted on the side of Fra. Benedetto, as he says,* "Prayer for the dead is more acceptable than for the living, for the dead are in the greatest need of it, and cannot help themselves as the living can."

How acceptable this devotion is to Almighty God, and how He vouchsafes to seem, as it were, impatient for the deliverance of the souls, and yet to leave it to our charity, is taught us on the unimpeachable authority of St. Theresa. In the book of her Foundations, she tells us that D. Bernardino di Mendoza gave her a house garden, and vineyard, for a convent at Valladolid. Two months after this, and before the foundation was effected, he was suddenly taken ill, and lost the power of speech, so that he could not make a confession, though he gave many signs of contrition. "He died," says St. Theresa, "very shortly, and far from the place where I then was. But our Lord spoke to me and told me that he was saved, though he had run a great risk, for that He had had mercy upon him because of the

* Suppl. 3. Part. q. 71. art. 5. ad. 3.

gift he had given for the convent of His Blessed Mother; but that his soul would not be freed from purgatory until the first mass was said in the new house. I felt so deeply the pains this soul was suffering, that although I was very desirous of accomplishing the foundation of Toledo, I left it at once for Valladolid. Praying one day at Medina del Campo, our Lord told me to make haste, for that soul was suffering grievously. On this I started at once, though I was not well prepared for it, and arrived at Valladolid on St. Lawrence's day." She then goes on to relate, that as she received communion at the first mass said in the house, her befactor's soul appeared to her all glorious, and afterward entered heaven. She did not expect this, for, as she observes, "although it had been revealed to me that this would happen at the first mass, I thought it must mean the first mass when the Blessed Sacrament would be reserved there." We might multiply almost indefinitely the revelations of the saints which go to prove the special favour with which our Blessed Lord regards this devotion wherein His interests are so nearly and dearly engaged. But it is time now to get a clear view of our subject.

There are, as we all know, two worlds, the world of sense and the world of spirit. We live in the world of sense, surrounded by the world of spirit, and as Christians, we have hourly and very real communications with that world. Now, it is a mere fragment of the Church which is in the world of sense. In these days the Church triumphant in heaven, collecting its fresh multitudes in every age, and constantly beautifying itself with new saints, must necessarily far exceed the limits of the Church Militant, which does not em-

brace even a majority of the inhabitants of earth. Nor is it unlikely, but most likely, that the Church Suffering in Purgatory must far exceed the Church Militant in extent, as it surpasses it in beauty. Toward those countless hosts who are lost we have no duties: they have fallen away from us; we hardly know the name of one who is there, for many have thought that Solomon was saved, some have gone so far as to regard the words in the Acts of the Apostles about Judas as not infallibly decisive, and there is not quite a consent even against Saul. We are cut off from them; all is blackness and darkness about them; we have no relations with them.

But by the doctrine of the communion of saints, and of the unity of Christ's mystical body, we have most intimate relations both of duty and affection with the Church Triumphant and Suffering; and Catholic devotion furnishes us with many appointed and approved ways of discharging these duties toward them. Of these I shall speak hereafter. For the present it is enough to say that God has given us such power over the dead that they seem, as I have said before, to depend almost more on earth than on heaven; and surely that He has given us this power, and supernatural methods of exercising it, is not the least touching proof that His Blessed Majesty has contrived all things for love. Can we not conceive the joy of the Blessed in heaven, looking down from the bosom of God and the calmness of their eternal repose upon this scene of dimness, disquietude, doubt, and fear, and rejoicing in the plentitude of their charity, in their vast power with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to obtain grace and blessing day and night for the poor dwellers upon earth? It does not

distract them from God, it does not interfere with the Vision, or make it waver and grow misty; it does not trouble their glory or their peace. On the contrary, it is with them as with our guardian Angels; the affectionate ministries of their charity increase their own accidental glory. The same joy in its measure may be ours even upon earth. If we are fully possessed with this catholic devotion for the Holy Souls, we shall never be without the grateful consciousness of the immense powers which Jesus has given us on their behalf. We are never so like Him, or so nearly imitate His tender offices, as when we are devoutly exercising these powers. We are humbled excessively by becoming the benefactors of those beautiful souls who are so immeasurably our superiors, as Joseph was said to have learned humility by commanding Jesus. We love Jesus with a love beyond words, a love that almost makes us afraid, yet with what a delightful fear! Because in this devotion it is His hands we are moving, as we would move the unskilful hands of a child. Dearest Lord, that He should let us do these things! That He should let us do with His satisfactions what we will, and sprinkle His Precious Blood as if it were so much water from the nearest well! That we should limit the efficacy of His unbloody sacrifice, and name souls to Him, and expect Him to obey us, and that He should do so! Beautiful was the helplessness of His blessed infancy; beautiful is His helplessness in His most dear sacrament; beautiful is the helplessness in which for the love of us He mostly wills to be with regard to His dear spouses in purgatory, whose entrance into glory His Heart is so impatiently awaiting! Oh, what thoughts, what feelings, what love should be ours, as

we, like choirs of terrestrial angels, gaze down on the wide, silent, sinless kingdom of suffering, and then with our own venturous touch wave the sceptred hand of Jesus over its broad regions all richly dropping with the balsam of His saving Blood!

There have always been two views of purgatory prevailing in the Church, not contradictory the one of the other, but rather expressive of the mind and devotion of those who have embraced them. One is the view met with in by far the greater number of the lives and revelations of Italian and Spanish saints, the works of the Germans of the Middle Ages, and the popular delineations of purgatory in Belgium, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, and elsewhere. The other is the view which has been made popular by St. Francis of Sales, though he drew it originally from his favourite treatise on purgatory by St. Catherine of Genoa, and it is also borne out by many of the revelations of Sister Francesca of Pampeluna, a Theresian nun, published with a long and able censura by Fra. Giuseppe Bonaventura Ponze, a Dominican professor at Saragossa. And each of these two views, though neither denies the other, has its own peculiar spirit of devotion.

1. The first view is embodied in the terrifying sermons of Italian Quaresimali, and in those wayside pictures which so often provoke the fastidiousness of the English traveller. It loves to represent purgatory simply as a hell which is not eternal. Violence, confusion, wailing, horror, preside over its descriptions. It dwells, and truly, on the terribleness of the pain of sense which the soul is mysteriously permitted to endure. The fire is the same fire as that of hell, created for the single and express purpose of giving torture.

Our earthly fire is as painted fire compared to it. Besides this, there is a special and indefinable horror to the unbodied soul in becoming the prey of this material agony. The sense of imprisonment, close and intolerable, and the intense palpable darkness, are additional features in the horror of the scene, which prepare us for that sensible neighbourhood to hell, which many saints have spoken of as belonging to purgatory. Angels are represented as active executioners of God's awful justice. Some have even held that the demons were permitted to touch and harass the spouses of Christ in those ardent fires. Then to this terribleness of the pain of sense is added the dreadfulness of the pain of loss. The beauty of God remains in itself the same immensely desirable object it ever was. But the soul is changed. All that in life and in the world of sense dulled its desires after God is gone from it, so that it seeks Him with an impetuosity which no imagination can at all conceive. The very burning excess of its love becomes the measure of its intolerable pain. And what love can do even on earth we may learn from the example of Father John Baptist Sanchez, who said he was sure he should die of misery, if any morning when he rose he should know that he was certain not to die that day. To these horrors we might add many more which depict purgatory simply as a hell which is not eternal.

The spirit of this view is a holy fear of offending God, a desire for bodily austerities, a great value put upon indulgences, an extreme horror of sin, and an habitual trembling before the judgments of God. Those who have led lives of unusual penance, and severe Orders in religion, have always been impreg-

nated with this view; and it seems to have been borne out in its minutest details by the conclusions of scholastic theologians, as may be seen at once by referring to Bellarmine, who, in each section of his treatise on purgatory, compares the revelations of the saints with the consequences of theology. It is remarkable also that when the Blessed Henry Suso, through increased familiarity and love of God, began to think comparatively lightly of the pains of purgatory, our Lord warned him that this was very displeasing to Him. For what judgment can be light which God has prepared for sin? Many theologians have said, not only that the least pain of purgatory was greater than the greatest pain of earth, but greater than all the pains of earth put together. This, then, is a true view of purgatory, but not a complete one. Yet it is not one which we can safely call coarse or grotesque. It is the view of many saints and servants of God: and it is embodied in the popular celebrations of All Souls' Day in several Catholic countries.

2. The second view of purgatory does not deny any one of the features of the preceding view, but it almost puts them out of sight by the other considerations which it brings more prominently forward. It goes into purgatory with its eyes fascinated and its spirit sweetly tranquillized by the face of Jesus, its first sight of the Sacred Humanity, at the Particular Judgment which it has undergone. That vision abides with it still, and beautifies the uneven terrors of its prison, as if with perpetual silvery showers of moonlight which seem to fall from our Saviour's loving eyes. In the sea of fire it holds fast by that image. The moment that in His sight it perceives its own unfitness for heaven, it wings its

voluntary flight to purgatory, like a dove to her proper nest in the shadows of the forest. There need no angels to convey it thither. It is its own free worship of the purity of God. This is beautifully expressed in a revelation of St. Gertrude, related by Blosius. The saint saw in spirit the soul of a religious who had passed her life in the exercise of the most lofty virtues. She was standing before our Lord clothed and adorned with charity; but she did not dare to lift her eyes to look at Him. She kept them cast down as if she was ashamed to stand in His presence, and showed by some gesture her desire to be far from Him. Gertrude marvelled at this, and ventured to question Him: "Most merciful God! why dost Thou not receive this soul into the arms of Thine infinite charity? And what are these strange gestures of diffidence which I behold in her?" Then our Lord lovingly stretched out His right arm, as if He would draw the soul nearer to Himself; but she, with profound humility and great modesty, retired from Him. The saint, lost in still greater wonder, asked why she fled from the embraces of a spouse so worthy to be loved; and the religious answered her, "Because I am not yet perfectly cleansed from the stains which my sins have left behind them; and even if He were to grant me in this state a free entrance into heaven, I would not accept it; for all resplendent as I look to your eyes, I know that I am not yet a fit spouse for my Lord."

In that moment the soul loves God most tenderly, and in return is most tenderly beloved by Him. To the eyes of those who take this view, that soul seems most beautiful. How should a dear spouse of God be anything but beautiful? The soul is in punishment,

true; but it is in unbroken union with God. "It has no remembrance," says St. Catherine of Genoa most positively, "no remembrance at all of its past sins, or of earth." Its sweet prison, its holy sepulchre, is in the adorable will of its heavenly Father, and there it abides the term of its purification with the most perfect contentment and the most unutterable love. As it is not teased by any vision of self or sin, so neither is it harassed by an atom of fear, or by a single doubt of its own imperturbable security. It is impeccable; and there was a time on earth when that gift alone seemed as if it would contain all heaven in itself. It cannot commit the slightest imperfection. It cannot have the least movement of impatience. It can do nothing whatever which will in the least degree displease God. It loves God above every thing, and it loves Him with a pure and disinterested love. It is constantly consoled by angels, and cannot but rejoice in the confirmed assurance of its own salvation. Nay, its very bitterest agonies are accompanied by a profound, unshaken peace, such as the language of this world has no words to tell. There are revelations which speak of some who are in purgatory, but have no fire. They languish patiently detained from God, and that is enough chastisement for them. There are revelations too which tell of multitudes who are in no local prison, but abide their purification in the air, or by their graves, or near altars where the Blessed Sacrament is, or in the rooms of those who pray for them, or amid the scenes of their former vanity and frivolity. If silent suffering, sweetly, gracefully endured, is a thing so venerable on earth, what must this region of the Church be like? Compared with earth, its trials, doubts, exciting and de-

pressing risks, how much more beautiful, how much more desirable, that still, calm, patient realm over which Mary is crowned as queen, and Michael is the perpetual ambassador of her mercy.

The spirit of this view is love, an extreme desire that God should not be offended, a yearning for the interests of Jesus. It takes its tone from the soul's first voluntary flight into that heritage of suffering. As it took God's part against itself in that act, so is it throughout. This view of purgatory turns on the worship of God's purity and sanctity. It looks at things from God's point of view, and merges its own interests in His. It is just the view we might expect to come from St. Francis of Sales, or the loving St. Catherine of Genoa. And it is the helplessness rather than the wretchedness of the souls detained which moves those who take this view to compassion and devotion; but it is God's glory and the interests of Jesus, which influence them most of all.

Oh how solemn and subduing is the thought of that holy kingdom, that realm of pain. There is no cry, no murmur; all is silent, silent as Jesus before His enemies. We shall never know how we really love Mary till we look up to her out of those deeps, those vales of dread mysterious fire. O beautiful region of the Church of God! O lovely troop of the flock of Mary! What a scene is presented to our eyes when we gaze upon that consecrated empire of sinlessness, and yet of keenest suffering! There is the beauty of those immaculate souls, and then the loveliness, yea, the worshipfulness of their patience, the majesty of their gifts, the dignity of their solemn and chaste sufferings, the eloquence of their silence; the moonlight of Mary's

throne lighting up their land of pain and unspeechful expectation; the silver-winged angels voyaging through the deeps of that mysterious realm; and above all, that unseen Face of Jesus which is so well remembered that it seems to be almost seen! Oh what a sinless purity of worship is here in this liturgy of hallowed pain! O world, O weary, clamorous, sinful world! who would not break away if he could, like an uncaged dove, from thy perilous toils and unsafe pilgrimage, and fly with joy to the lowest place in that most pure, most safe, most holy land of suffering and of sinless love?

The publication of St. Catherine's treatise is so remarkable a feature in the history of the doctrine and devotion connected with purgatory, that it may be well to give my readers a brief account of it. Mgr. Hardouin Perefix, archbishop of Paris, had it examined by the doctors of the Sorbonne in 1666, and in their approval, they call it a "rare effusion of the Spirit of God upon a pure and loving soul, and a marvellous token of His solicitude for His Church, and His care in enlightening her and assisting her according to her needs;" and the approbation goes on to say that the examiners consider it a providential provision for Catholics just when the heresies of Luther and Calvin were about, among their other impieties, to make war upon the dead. In 1675, Martin d'Esparza, a Jesuit, presented his censure of the treatise to Cardinal Azolini, who was *ponente* in the cause of the saint's beatification. In this he says that the doctrine of her treatise is "incontaminate, most salutary, and altogether seraphic," that it has been "impressed upon her soul by the Holy Spirit with a very special and secret illumination," and that its doctrine, together with that of

her dialogue between the Soul and the Body, is "of itself a most efficacious proof of the heroic sanctity of the servant of God." It is remarked by Maineri, in his Life of the Saint, as a curious coincidence, that the name of purgatory was first authoritatively given to the Intermediate State in 1254 by Innocent IV., who was of the house of Fieschi, the family of our saint.

The following is an epitome of the docrine of her treatise. No sooner has a soul, with the guilt of no mortal sin upon it, but owing to God a debt of temporal punishment, issued from the world, and been judged, than it perceives itself to be confirmed in grace and charity. It is incapable either of sinning or of meriting any more; and it is destined by an eternal and immutable decree to enter one day as a queen into the kingdom of the blessed, to see, to love, and to enjoy God, the perpetual fountain of all felicity.

In that instant all the sins of its past life are represented to the soul, whether mortal or venial, even though they have been remitted in lifetime by contrition and the sacrament of penance. But after this transitory and instantaneous view of them, the soul remembers nothing more about them. The saint's words are, "The cause of purgatory, which these souls have in themselves, they see once for all in passing out of this life, and never afterward." The reason of this exhibition of sins is, she teaches us, to enable the soul in that moment, by an act, no longer indeed meritorious, but nevertheless a real act of the will, to detest all its sins afresh, and especially those venial sins for which it had no contrition in lifetime, either through the weakness of an imperfect heart, or through the acci-

dent of a sudden death, that so it may be strictly true, that no sin whatever is pardoned unless the sinner make an act of detestation of it.

After this momentary view of sins and formal detestation of them, the soul perceives in itself their evil consequences and "malignant legacies," and these form what the saint calls "the impediment to seeing God." "The rust of sin," she says, "is the impediment, and the fire keeps consuming the rust; and as a thing which is covered cannot correspond to the reverberation of the sun's rays, so if the covering be consumed, the thing is at length laid open to the sun." It is thus that purgatory wears away from the soul the obligation (reatus) of venial sin, and also the obligation of temporal punishment for remitted mortal sin. This last statement, my readers will perceive, is not really, as some have thought, at variance with the teaching of Suarez, and other scholastics, who maintain that there is no *stain* in the soul left by sin, and requiring the cleansing action of those penal fires. The saint speaks throughout as if purgatory was not so much a cleansing from stain, as a quitting oneself of an obligation.

As soon as the soul perceives itself to be acceptable to God, and constituted heir of paradise, but unable, because of this impediment, to take immediate possession of its inheritance, it conceives an intense desire to be rid of this hindrance, this double obligation of guilt and punishment. But knowing that purgatory alone can consume these two obligations, and that it is for that very end God condemns the soul to the fire, it desires itself to endure the punishment. "The soul separated from the body, (these are the saint's own

words,) not finding in itself all the requisite purity, and seeing in itself this impediment which cannot be taken away except by purgatory, at once throws itself into it with right good will. Nay, if it did not find this ordinance of purgatory, aptly contrived for the removal of this hindrance, there would instantaneously be generated in it a hell far worse than purgatory, inasmuch as it would see that because of this impediment it could not get alongside of God, who is its end. Wherefore, if the soul could find another purgatory fiercer than this, in which it could the sooner get rid of this impediment, it would speedily plunge itself therein, through the impetuosity of the love it bears to God."

But this is not all. In the following chapter the saint goes on to teach that if the soul, labouring under this impediment, were free to choose between ascending at once, and as she is, to paradise, and descending to suffer in purgatory, she would choose to suffer, although the sufferings be almost as dreadful as those of hell. These are her words: "Of how much importance purgatory is, no tongue can tell, no mind conceive. So much I see, that its pain is almost as if it were that of hell; and yet I see also that the soul which perceives in itself the slightest flaw or mote of imperfection, would rather throw itself into a thousand hells than find itself in the presence of the Divine Majesty with that defect upon it; and therefore, seeing purgatory to be ordained for the very taking away of these flaws, forthwith it plunges into it, and it seems by its bearing, as I see, to conceive that it finds there an invention of no little mercy, simply in the being able to get quit of this impediment."

When the righteous soul has thus arrived in purgatory, losing sight of every thing else, it sees before it only two objects, the extremity of suffering and the extremity of joy. A most tremendous pain is caused by knowing that God loves it with an infinite love, that He is the Chief Good, that He regards the soul as His daughter, and that He has predestinated it to enjoy Him for ever in company with the Blessed; and hence the soul loves Him with a pure and most perfect charity. At the same time it perceives that it cannot see Him or enjoy Him yet, though it so intensely yearns to do so; and this afflicts it so much the more, as it is quite uncertain when the term of its penal exile, away from its Lord and paradise, will be fulfilled. This is the pain of loss in purgatory, of which the saint says that it is "a pain so extreme that no tongue can tell it, no understanding grasp the least portion of it. Though God in His favour showed me a little spark thereof, yet can I not in any way express it with my tongue." This pain of loss she likens to the longing for a loaf of bread. "If in all the world there were but one loaf, which was able to satisfy the hunger of all creatures, who would be satiated by simply beholding it, what would be the feelings of a man who possesses by nature an instinct to eat, when he is in health; what, I say, would be his feelings if he were neither able to eat, nor yet to be ill or to die? His hunger would be always increasing, and knowing there was but that one loaf to satisfy him, and yet not being able to get at it, he would remain in unbearable torture." This similitude, however, puts before us but a shadow of what the soul really suffers. It is continually borne with an imperceptible loving violence toward

God, who alone can perfectly satisfy it. This violence is always on the increase, the longer the hungry soul is deprived of its Divine Object, for which it is unspeakably ravenous; and its torture would thus keep increasing also, were it not daily mitigated by hope, yea, rather by the certainty that it is approaching nearer and nearer to its eternal bliss. In the words of the prophet, the sufferer knows that "because his soul hath laboured, he shall see and be filled."*

The soul undergoing the pain of sense the saint likens to gold in the crucible. "Look at the gold; the more you melt it the better it becomes, and you melt it until every imperfection is annihilated. This is the effect of fire upon material things. But the soul cannot annihilate itself in God, but it can in its own self; and the more it is purified, the more it is annihilated in itself, until at last it rests itself in God quite pure. Gold, when, as their phrase is, it is purified to twenty-four carats, will not waste away any more, no matter how much fire you apply to it, because in reality nothing is consumed but imperfection. The divine fire acts in like manner upon the soul. God holds it in the fire till every imperfection is consumed, and until He reduces it to the purity of twenty-four carats; every one, however, according to its own degree. When the soul is purified, it rests altogether in God, without retaining any thing in itself. God is its life. And when He has brought the soul to Himself thus purified, it becomes impassible, for there is nothing left in it to consume away; and if it were still held in the fire when it is thus purified, the fire would give it no pain,

* Isaias liii. 11.

nay, it would be then the fire of Divine Love, itself eternal life, wherein the soul could experience no more contradictions."

Such is the first object before the eyes of the soul, the extremity of suffering. Now let us examine the other object, the extremity of joy. As it loves God with the purest affection, and knows its sufferings to be the will of God in order to its purification, it conforms itself perfectly to the divine decree. While in purgatory, it sees nothing but that this pleases God; it takes in no idea but that of His will; it apprehends nothing so clearly as the suitableness of this purification, in order to present it all fair and lovely to so great a Majesty. Thus the saint says, "If a soul, having still something left to be cleansed away, were presented to the vision of God, it would consider itself grievously injured, and its suffering would be worse than that of ten purgatories; for it would be quite unable to endure that excessive Goodness and that exquisite Justice." Hence it is that the suffering soul is entirely resigned to the will of its Creator. It loves its very pains, and rejoices in them, because they are a holy ordinance of God. Thus in the midst of the ardent heat it enjoys a contentment so complete, that it exceeds the grasp of human intelligence to comprehend it. "I do not believe," says the saint, "that it is possible to find a contentment to compare with that of the souls in purgatory, unless it be the contentment of the saints in paradise. This contentment increases daily through the influx of God into those souls, and this influx increases in proportion as the impediment is consumed and worn away. Indeed, so far as the will is concerned, we can hardly say that the pains are pains at

all, so contentedly do the souls rest in the ordinance of God, to whose will pure love unites them."

In another place she says that this inexplicable jubilee of the soul, while it is undergoing purgatory, springs from the strength and purity of its love of God. "This love gives to the soul such a contentment as cannot be expressed. But this contentment does not take away one iota of the pain; nay, it is the retarding of love from the possession of its object which causes the pain; and the pain is greater according to the greater perfection of love of which God has made the soul capable. Thus the souls in purgatory have at once the greatest contentment and the greatest suffering; and the one in no way hinders the other." As to prayers, alms, and masses, she asserts that the souls experience great consolation from them; but that in these, as in other matters, their principal solicitude is that every thing should be "weighed in the most equitable scales of the Divine Will, leaving God to take His own course in every thing, and to pay Himself and His justice in the way His own infinite goodness chooses to select."

She concludes her treatise by casting one glance upon her neighbour and one upon herself. To her neighbour, she says, "Oh that I could cry so loud that I might frighten all the men who dwell upon the earth, and say to them, 'O miserable men! why have you let yourselves be so blinded by this world, as not to make any provision for that imperious necessity, which you will find at the moment of death? You all of you shelter yourselves under the hope of God's mercy. But do you not see that the very goodness of God will rise up in judgment against you, for having rebelled against

the will of so good a Lord?' Do not lull yourselves into a false confidence by saying, 'When I come to die I will make a good confession, and then I will take the plenary indulgence, and thus in that last moment I shall be cleansed from all my sins, and so I shall be saved.' Think a little. Confession and contrition are necessary for a plenary indulgence; and contrition is such a hard thing to get, that if you knew how hard it was, you would tremble for very fear, and you would be much more likely to believe that such a grace would never be given you, than to expect it with such confidence as you do now."

When she looked at herself with the light of a supernatural illumination, she saw that God had set her up in the Church as an express and living image of purgatory. She says, "This form of purification, which I behold in the souls in purgatory, I perceive in my own soul now. I see that my soul dwells in its body as in a purgatory altogether conformable to the true purgatory, only in such measure as my body can bear without dying. Nevertheless it is always increasing by little and little, until it reaches the point when it will really die." Her death was indeed most wonderful, and has always been considered as a martyrdom of Divine Love. So truly from the first has her position been appreciated, as the great doctress of purgatory, that in the old life of her, the "vita antica," examined by theologians in 1670, and approved in the Roman process of her canonization, and which was composed by Marabotto her confessor, and Vernazza her spiritual son, it is said, "Verily it seems that God set up this His creature as a mirror and an example of the pains of the other life, which souls suffer in

purgatory. It is just as if He had placed her upon a high wall, dividing this life from the life to come; so that seeing what is suffered in that life beyond, she might manifest to us, even in this life, what we are to expect when we have passed the boundary." This is a mere epitome of her wonderful and exquisitely beautiful treatise, which has given St. Catherine a rank among the theologians of the Church.

The same view of Purgatory as that taken by St. Catherine is very briefly but touchingly embodied by Dante, in that beautiful scene where he and Virgil are wandering on the outskirts of purgatory. The poet is dazzled all at once by the bright light of an angel coming across the sea, and impelling a bark filled with new souls for purgatory; and he describes the boat as driving toward the shore so lightly, that it drew no wake upon the water, while the souls that had left life, and earth, and judgment, but a few minutes since, pensively yet cheeringly sang, "In exitu Israel de Egypto." Surely it was a beautiful thought of his; and as he was a theologian as well as a poet, it seems to deserve mention here, as a proof of the view of purgatory which recommended itself to intellectual men in Dante's day.

3. But let us now see what is common to both these views of purgatory. This is a more practical consideration. I suppose there are none of us who expect to be lost. We know and feel, with more or less of alarm, the greatness of the risk we are running; but to expect to be lost would be the sin of despair. Hell is only practical to us as a motive of greater diligence, greater strictness, greater circumspectness, greater fear. But it is not so with purgatory. I suppose we

all expect, or think ourselves sure, to go there. If we do not think much of the matter at all, then we may have some vague notion of going straight to heaven as soon as we are judged. But if we seriously reflect upon it, upon our own lives, upon God's sanctity, upon what we read in books of devotion and the lives of the Saints, I can hardly conceive any one of us expecting to escape purgatory, and not rather feeling that it must be almost a stretch of the Divine Mercy which will get us even there. It would more likely be vain presumption than heroic hope, if we thought otherwise. Now, if we really expect that our road to heaven will be through the punishments of purgatory, for surely its purification is penal, it very much concerns us to know what is common to both the views of purgatory, which it appears prevail in the Church.

First, both these views agree that the pains are extremely severe, as well because of the office which God intends them to fulfil, as because of the disembodied soul being the subject of them. Both agree also in the length of the suffering. This requires to be dwelt upon, as it is hard to convince people of it, and a great deal comes of the conviction, both to ourselves and others. This duration may be understood in two ways, first, as of actual length of time, and secondly, as of seeming length from the excess of pain. With regard to the first, if we look into the revelations of Sister Francesca of Pampeluna, we shall find, among some hundreds of cases, that by far the greater majority suffered thirty, forty, or sixty years. Here are some of the examples: a holy bishop, for some negligence in his high office, had been in purgatory fifty-nine years, before he appeared to the servant of God;

another bishop, so generous of his revenues that he was named the almsgiver, had been there five years because he had wished for the dignity; another bishop had been forty; a priest forty years because through his negligence some sick persons had died without the sacraments; another forty-five years for inconsiderateness in his ministerial functions; a gentleman fifty-nine years for worldliness; another sixty-four for fondness for playing at cards for money; another thirty-five years for worldliness. Bishops seem upon the whole, according to her revelations, to remain longest there, and to be visited with the extreme of rigour.

Without multiplying instances, which it would be easy to do, these disclosures may teach us greater watchfulness over ourselves, and more unwearied perseverance in praying for the departed. The old foundations for perpetual masses embody the same sentiment. We are apt to leave off too soon, imagining with a foolish and unenlightened fondness that our friends are freed from purgatory much sooner than they really are. If Sister Francesca beheld the souls of many fervent Carmelites, some of whom had wrought miracles in lifetime, still in purgatory ten, twenty, thirty, sixty years after their death, and still not near their deliverance, as many told her, what must become of us and ours? Then as to seeming length from the extremity of pain, there are many instances on record in the Chronicles of the Franciscans, the life of St. Francis Jerome, and elsewhere, of souls appearing an hour or two after death, and thinking they had been many years in purgatory. And such may be the purgatory of those who are caught up to meet the Lord at the Last Day.

Both views agree again in holding that, what we in

the world call very trivial faults, are most severely visited in purgatory. St. Peter Damian gives us many instances of this, and others are collected and quoted by Bellarmine. Slight feelings of self-complacency, trifling inattentions in the recital of the Divine Office, and the like, occur frequently among them. Sister Francesca mentions the case of a girl of fourteen in purgatory because she was not quite conformed to the will of God in dying so young; and one soul said to her, "Ah! men little think in the world how dearly they are going to pay here for faults they hardly note there." She even saw souls that were immensely punished only for having been scrupulous in this life; either, I suppose, because there is mostly self-will in scruples, or because they did not lay them down when obedience was commanded. Wrong notions about small faults may thus lead us to neglect the dead, or leave off our prayers too soon, as well as lose a lesson for ourselves.

Then again, both views agree as to the helplessness of the Holy Souls. They lie like the paralytic at the pool. Not even the coming of the angel is any blessing to them, unless there be some one of us to help them. Some have even thought they cannot pray. Anyhow, they have no means of making themselves heard by us on whose charity they depend. Some writers have said, that our Blessed Lord will not help them without our co-operation; and that our Blessed Lady cannot help them, except in direct ways, because she is no longer able to make satisfaction; though I never like to hear of any thing our dearest Mother cannot do. Whatever may come of these opinions, they at least illustrate the strong way in which theologians ap-

prehend the helplessness of the Holy Souls. Then another feature in their helplessness is the forgetfulness of the living, or the cruel flattery of relations who will always have it that those near or dear to them die the death of Saints. They would surely have a scruple, if they knew of how many masses and prayers they rob the souls, by the selfish exaggeration of their goodness. I call it selfish, for it is nothing more than a miserable device to console themselves in their sorrow. The very state of the Holy Souls is one of the most unbounded helplessness. They cannot do penance; they cannot merit; they cannot satisfy; they cannot gain indulgences; they have no sacraments; they are not under the jurisdiction of God's Vicar, overflowing with the plenitude of means of grace and manifold benedictions. They are a portion of the Church without either priesthood or altar at their own command.

These are the points common to both views of purgatory; and how manifold are the lessons we learn from them, on our own behalf as well as on behalf of the Holy Souls. For ourselves, what light does all this throw on slovenliness, lukewarmness, and love of ease? What, does it make us think of performing our devotions out of a mere spirit of formality, or a trick of habit? What a change should it not work in our lives! What diligence in our examens, confessions, communions, and prayers! It seems as if the grace of all graces, for which we should ever be importuning our dear Lord, would be to hate sin with something of the hatred wherewith He hated it in the garden of Gethsemane. Oh, is not the purity of God something awful, unspeakable, adorable? He, who is Himself a

simple act, has gone on acting, multiplying acts since creation, yet He has incurred no stain! He is ever mingling with a most unutterable condescension with what is beneath Him,—yet no stain! He loves His creatures with a love immeasurably more intense than the wildest passion of earth,—yet no stain! He is omnipotent, yet it is beyond the limits of His power to receive a stain. He is so pure that the very vision of Him causes eternal purity and blessedness. Mary's purity is but a fair thin shadow of it. Nay, the Sacred Humanity itself cannot adequately worship the purity of the Most High. And we are to dwell in His arms for ever, we are to dwell amid the everlasting burnings of that Uncreated Purity. Yet, let us look at our lives; let us trace our hearts faithfully through but one day, and see of what mixed intentions, human respects, self-love, and pusillanimous temper our actions, nay even our devotions, are made up; and does not purgatory, heated seven-fold, and endured to the day of doom, seem but a gentle novitiate for the Vision of the All-holy?

But some persons turn in anger from the thought of purgatory, as if it were not to be endured, that after trying all our lives long to serve God, we should accomplish the tremendous feat of a good death, only to pass from the agonies of the death-bed into fire, long, keen, searching, triumphant, incomparable fire. Alas! my dear friends, your anger will not help you nor alter facts. But have you thought sufficiently about God? Have you tried to realize His holiness and purity in assiduous meditation? Is there a real divorce between you and the world, which you know is God's enemy? Do you take God's side?

Have you wedded His interests? Do you long for His glory? Have you put sin alongside of our dear Saviour's Passion, and measured the one by the other? Oh, if you had, purgatory would but seem to you the last, unexpected, and inexpressibly tender invention of an obstinate love, which was mercifully determined to save you in spite of yourself! It would be a perpetual wonder to you, a joyous wonder, fresh every morning, a wonder that would be meat and drink to your soul, that you, being what you are, what you know yourself to be, what you may conceive God knows you to be, should be saved eternally! Remember what the suffering soul said so simply, yet with such force to Sister Francesca, "Ah! those on that side the grave little reckon how dearly they will pay on this side for the lives they live!" To be angry because you are told you will go to purgatory! Silly, silly people! most likely it is a great false flattery, and that you will never be good enough to go there at all. Why positively, you do not recognise your own good fortune, when you are told of it. And none but the humble go there. I remember Maria Crocifissa was told, that although many of the Saints while on earth loved God more than some do even in heaven, yet that the greatest saint on earth was not so *humble* as are the souls in purgatory. I do not think I ever read any thing in the lives of the Saints which struck me so much as that. You see it is not well to be angry; for those only are lucky enough to get into purgatory, who sincerely believe themselves to be worthy of hell.

But we not only learn lessons for our own good, but for the good of the Holy Souls. We see that our cha-

ritable attentions toward them must be far more vigorous and persevering than they have been; for that men go to purgatory for very little matters, and remain there an unexpectedly long time. But their most touching appeal to us lies in their helplessness; and our dear Lord, with His usual loving arrangement, has made the extent of our power to help them more than commensurate with their inability to help themselves. Some theologians have said that prayer for the Holy Souls is not infallibly answered. I confess their arguments on this head do not convince me; but, conceding the point, how wonderful still is the power which we can exercise in favour of the departed! St. Thomas has at least taught us that prayer for the dead is more readily accepted with God than prayer for the living. We can offer and apply for them all the satisfactions of our Blessed Lord. We can do vicarious penance for them. We can give to them all the satisfaction of our ordinary actions, and of our sufferings. We can make over to them by way of suffrage, the indulgences we gain, provided the Church has made them applicable to the dead. We can limit and direct upon them, or any one of them, the intention of the Adorable Sacrifice. The Church, which has no jurisdiction over them, can yet make indulgences applicable or inapplicable to them by way of suffrage; and by means of liturgy, commemoration, incense, holy water, and the like, can reach efficaciously to them, and most of all by her device of privileged altars. The Communion of Saints furnishes the veins and channels by which all these things reach them in Christ. Heaven itself condescends to act upon them through earth. Their queen helps them by setting us to work for them, and the angels and the saints

bestow their gifts through us, whom they persuade to be their almoners; nay, we are often their almoners without knowing that we are so. Our blessed Lord vouchsafes to look to us, as if He would say, Here are My weapons, work for Me! just as a father will let his child do a portion of his work, in spite of the risk he runs of having it spoiled. To possess such powers, and not to use them, would be the height of irreverence toward God, as well as of want of charity to men. There is nothing so irreverent, because nothing so unfilial, as to shrink from God's gifts simply because of their exuberance. Men have a feeling of safety in not meddling with the supernatural; but the truth is, we cannot stand aloof on one side and be safe. If we do not enter the system, and humbly take our place in it, it will draw us in, only to tear us to pieces when it has done so. The dread of the supernatural is the unsafest of feelings. The jealousy of it is a prophecy of eternal loss, which far too often comes true.

All that I have said hitherto has been, indirectly at least, a plea for this devotion; but I must come now to a more direct recommendation of it.

1. It is not saying too much to call devotion to the Holy Souls a kind of centre in which all Catholic devotions meet, and which satisfies more than any other single devotion our duties in that way; because it is a devotion all of love, and of disinterested love. If we cast an eye over the chief Catholic devotions, we shall see the truth of this. Take the devotion of St. Ignatius to the glory of God. This, if I may dare to use such an expression of Him, was the special and favourite devotion of Jesus. Now, purgatory is simply a field

white for the harvest of God's glory. Not a prayer can be said for the Holy Souls, but God is at once glorified, both by the faith and the charity of the mere prayer. Not an alleviation, however trifling, can befall any one of the souls, but He is forthwith glorified by the honour of His Son's Precious Blood, and the approach of the soul to bliss. Not a soul is delivered from its trial, but God is immensely glorified. He crowns His own gifts in that dear soul. The cross of Christ has triumphed. The decree of predestination is victoriously accomplished; and there is a new worshipper in the courts of heaven. Moreover, God's glory, His sweetest glory, the glory of His love, is sooner or later infallible in purgatory; because there is no sin there, nor possibility of sin. It is only a question of time. All that is gained, is real gain. All that is reaped is true wheat, without chaff or stubble, or any such thing.

Again, what devotion is justly more dear to Christians than the devotion to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus? It is rather a family of various and beautiful devotions, than a devotion by itself. Yet see how they are all, as it were, fulfilled, affectionately fulfilled, in devotion to the Holy Souls. The quicker the souls are liberated from purgatory, the more is the beautiful harvest of His blessed Passion multiplied and accelerated. An early harvest is a blessing, as well as a plentiful one; for all delay of a soul's ingress into the praise of heaven is an eternal and irremediable loss of honour and glory to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. How strangely things sound in the language of the sanctuary! yet, so it is. Can the Sacred Humanity be honoured more than by the adorable sacrifice of the

Mass? And here is our chief action upon purgatory. Faith in His sacraments as used for the dead is a pleasing homage to Jesus; and the same may be said of faith in indulgences and privileged altars, and the like. The powers of the Church all flow from His Sacred Humanity, and are a perpetual praise and thank-offering to It. So, again, this devotion honours Him by imitating His zeal for souls. For this zeal is a badge of His people, and an inheritance from Him.

Devotion to our dearest Mother is equally comprehended in this devotion to the Holy Souls, whether we look at her as the Mother of Jesus, and so sharing the honours of His Sacred Humanity, or as Mother of mercy, and so specially worshipped* by works of mercy, or, lastly, as in a particular sense, the queen of purgatory, and so having all manner of dear interests to be promoted in the welfare and deliverance of those suffering souls.

Next to this we may rank devotion to the holy angels, and this also is satisfied in devotion to the Holy Souls. For it keeps filling the vacant thrones in the angelic choirs, those unsightly gaps which the fall of Lucifer and one-third of the heavenly host occasioned. It multiplies the companions of the blessed spirits. They may be supposed also to look with an especial interest on that part of the Church which lies in purgatory, because it is already crowned with their own dear gift

*I do not refrain from the use of this word as the English translation of cultus; weary experience shows that objectors obstinately repeat their objections, whatever we do to abate them, and they rather triumph over the show of weakness, than appreciate the charity of such-like condescensions. We lose by them ourselves, without gaining our opponents.

and ornament of final perseverance, and yet it has not entered at once into its inheritance as they did. Many of them also have a tender personal interest in purgatory. Thousands, perhaps millions of them, are guardians to those souls, and their office is not over yet. Thousands have clients there who were specially devoted to them in life. Will St. Raphael, who was so faithful to Tobias, be less faithful to his clients there? Whole choirs are interested about others, either because they are finally to be aggregated to that choir, or because in lifetime they had a special devotion to it. Marie Denise, of the Visitation, used to congratulate her angel every day on the grace he had received to stand when so many around him were falling. It was, as I have said before, the only thing she could know for certain of his past life. Could he neglect her, if by the will of God she went to purgatory? Again, St. Michael, as prince of purgatory, and our Lady's regent, in fulfilment of the dear office attributed to him by the Church in the mass for the dead, takes as homage to himself all charity to the Holy Souls; and if it be true that a zealous heart is always a proof of a grateful one, that bold and magnificent spirit will recompense us one day in his own princely style, and perhaps within the limits of that his special jurisdiction.

Neither is devotion to the saints without its interests in this devotion for the dead. It fills them with the delights of charity as it swells their numbers and beautifies their ranks and orders. Numberless patron saints are personally interested in multitudes of souls. The affectionate relation between their clients and themselves not only subsists, but a deeper tenderness has entered into it, because of the fearful suffering, and a

livelier interest, because of the accomplished victory. They see in the Holy Souls their own handiwork, the fruit of their example, the answer to their prayers, the success of their patronage, the beautiful and finished crown of their affectionate intercession. And all this applies with peculiar force to the founders of orders and congregations. Ah! those saints, those founders, are the children of the Sacred Heart; they have been conceived in its inmost cavities; they have been suckled with its choicest Blood, softer than milk, and more cheering than the wine of Engaddi's peerless grape; their charity has caught the trick of Its compression and dilation: who then can tell how Founders yearn over their children in those cleansing fires? Those souls honoured them through life; they lived in their Father's and Founder's house; his voice was ever in their ears; his feasts there were days of song and joy, and spiritual sunshine; his relics were their shield; his rule their second gospel; his sayings and doings were ever on their lips; his dress and livery were dear to them as the garment of a king to his Eastern favourite; he was with them all day long; they loved him with a venturous love; they praised him till men smiled at their family pride; they feared him as one the darkening of whose eye upon their souls was a worse calamity than fire, or sword, or pestilence; and when they came to die, his name, and no other, except the names of Jesus and Mary, could so well soothe the troubled mind, so drive away the besetting demons, and so calm the starts, and frets, and catchings which, if they impair not the perfection of our patience, take away at least from death its joy-inspiring gracefulness. What wonder their Founder should love them, as he beholds

them bounding immaculate and beautiful, the gems of his order, the glory of his rule, in the chastening fires of God!

2. But there is another peculiarity in this devotion for the dead. It does not rest in words and feelings, nor does it merely lead to action at last. It is action in itself, and thus it is a substantial devotion. It speaks, and a deed is done; it loves, and a pain is lessened; it sacrifices, and a soul is delivered. Nothing can be more solid. We might almost dare to compare it, in its poor measure, to the efficacious voice of God, which works what it says, and effects what it utters and wills, and a creation comes. The royal devotion of the Church is the works of mercy; and see how they are all satisfied in this devotion for the dead! It feeds the hungry souls with Jesus, the Bread of Angels. It gives them to drink in their incomparable thirst His Precious Blood. It clothes the naked with the robe of glory. It visits the sick with mighty powers to heal, and at the least consoles them by the visit. It frees the captives with a heavenly and eternal freedom, from a bondage dreader far than death. It takes in the strangers, and heaven is the hospice into which it receives them. It buries the dead in the Bosom of Jesus in everlasting rest. Oh, when the last doom shall come, and our dearest Lord shall ask those seven questions of His judicial process, those interrogatories of the works of mercy, how happy will that man be, and it may be the poorest beggar among us, who never gave an alms because he has had to live on alms himself, who shall hear his own defence sweetly and eloquently taken up by crowds of blessed souls, to whom he has done all these things while they waited in their

prison-house of hope! Three times a day St. Francis of Sales put himself in the presence of God as before his judge, and tried to judge himself in his Saviour's way. Let us but do that, and we shall become so many servitors of Michael, so many guardian angels of that beautiful but melancholy land of suffering and expectant souls.

3. Another point of view from which we may look at this devotion for the dead, is as a specially complete and beautiful exercise of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which are the supernatural fountains of our whole spiritual life. It exercises faith, because it leads men not only to dwell in the unseen world, but to work for it with as much energy and conviction as if it was before their very eyes. Unthoughtful or ill-read persons almost start sometimes at the minuteness, familiarity, and assurance with which men talk of the unseen world, as if it were the banks of the Rhine, or the olive-yards of Provence, the Campagna of Rome, or the crescent shores of Naples, some place which they have seen in their travels, and whose geographical features are ever in their memory, as vividly as if before their eyes. It all comes of faith, of prayer, of spiritual reading, of knowledge of the lives of the saints, and of the study of theology. It would be strange and sad if it were not so. For, what to us, either in interest or importance, is the world we see, to the world we do not see? This devotion exercises our faith also in the effects of the sacrifice and sacraments, which are things we do not see, but which we daily talk of in reference to the dead as undoubted and accomplished facts. It exercises our faith in the communion of saints to a degree which would make it

seem impossible to a heretic that he ever could believe so wild and extravagant a creed. It acts with regard to indulgences as if they were the most inevitable material transactions of this world. It knows of the unseen treasure out of which they come, of the unseen keys which open the treasury, of the indefinite jurisdiction which places them infallibly at its disposal, of God's unrevealed acceptance of them, and of the invisible work they do, just as it knows of trees and clouds, of streets and churches—that is, just as certainly and undoubtingly; though it often can give others no proof of these things, nor account for them to itself. The difficult doctrine of satisfaction is no difficulty to the faith of this devotion. It moves about in it with the greatest ease, makes its own arrangements, transfers its satisfactions hither and thither, turns one in one direction, another in another, making quite sure of God being agreeable to it all. The details of daily household life are not ordered with more calmness and self-possession than are these hidden things which at every turn are starting questions almost the most difficult which the understanding can find to grapple with, or break itself upon. It exhibits the same quiet faith in all those Catholic devotions which I mentioned before as centring themselves in this devotion for the dead. As the prophet and apostle say, "My just man liveth by faith; but if he withdraw himself, he shall not please my soul;" and what is faith but "the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not?"*

Neither is this devotion a less heroic exercise of the

* Heb. x. and xi.

theological virtue of hope, the virtue so sadly wanting in the spiritual life of these times. For, look what a mighty edifice this devotion raises; lofty, intricate, and of magnificent proportions, into which somehow or other all creation is drawn, from the little headache we suffer up to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, and which has to do even with God Himself. And upon what does all this rest, except on a simple, childlike trust in God's fidelity, which is the supernatural motive of hope? We hope for the souls we help, and unbounded are the benedictions which we hope for in their regard. We hope to find mercy ourselves, because of our mercy; and this hope quickens our efforts without detracting from the merit of our charity. If we give away our own satisfactions and the indulgences we gain, to the souls in purgatory, instead of keeping them for ourselves, what is this but an heroic exercise of hope? We throw ourselves upon God. We hardly face the thought that we ourselves are thus sentencing ourselves, it may be, to abide years and years longer in that unconquerable fire. We shut our eyes, we quell the rising thought, we give our alms, and throw ourselves on God. We shall not be defrauded of our hope. Who ever trusted Him, and his trust failed? No! No! All is right, when it is left to God. Then, again, this devotion has to do altogether with things beyond the grave, and there is the region of hope. Its dwelling-place is behind the vail. "For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. For, what a man seeth, why doth he hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it with patience."*

* Rom. viii.

For the state of the dead is no dream, nor our power to help them a dream, any more than the purity of God is a dream, or the Precious Blood a dream. Thus, though there be consolations many, yet it is we who have "the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the vail, where the forerunner Jesus is entered for us, made a high-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedeck."*

As to the charity of this devotion, it dares to imitate even the charity of God Himself. What is there in heaven or on earth which it does not embrace, and with so much facility, with so much gracefulness, as if there were scarcely an effort in it, or as if self was charmed away, and might not mingle to distract it? It is an exercise of the love of God, for it is loving those whom He loves, and loving them because he loves them, and to augment His glory, and multiply His praise. There are a hundred loves of God in this one love, as we should see if we reflected on those Holy Souls, and realized all that was implied in the final entry of a soul into everlasting bliss. It is love toward the Sacred Humanity, because it magnifies the copious Redemption of Jesus. It honours His merits, satisfactions, ordinances, and mysteries. It peoples His heaven, and it glorifies His Blood. It is filled with Jesus, with His spirit, with His work, with His power, with His victories. No less is it an exercise of love to our dearest Lady, as I have shown before; and to the angels and the saints. How abundant is its charity to the souls

* Heb. vi.

themselves, who can exaggerate, whether we give them the good measure of all the Church tells us to do, and some spontaneous alms besides; or the full measure of all our satisfactions during lifetime, which are not by justice due elsewhere, as St. Gertrude gave them; or the measure shaken together, which adds all that shall be done for us when we are dead, like Father Monroy's heroic act of self-renunciation; or the measure running over, which heaps upon all the rest special works of love, such as promoting this devotion by conversations, sermons, and books, and by getting masses, communions, penances, indulgences, from others for them. All men living on the earth, even unconverted sinners, are included in it, because it swells the Church Triumphant, and so multiplies intercessors for us who are still warring upon earth. To ourselves also it is an exercise of charity, for it gains us friends in heaven; it earns mercy for us when we ourselves shall be in purgatory, tranquil victims, yet, oh, in what distress! and it augments our merits in the sight of God, and so, if only we persevere, our eternal recompense hereafter. Now if this tenderness for the dead is such an exercise of these three theological virtues, and if again even heroic sanctity consists principally in their exercise, what store ought we not to set upon this touching and beautiful devotion!

4. But a further excellence in this devotion is to be found in its effects upon the spiritual life. It would seem as if it were a devotion specially intended for interior souls. But the fact is, that it is so full of doctrine, and embodies so much that is supernatural, that we need not be surprised at the influence it exercises over the spiritual life. In the first place, it is a

hidden work from first to last. We do not see the results, so that there is little food for vain glory; neither is it a devotion the exercise of which appears in any way before the eyes of others. It implies, moreover, an utter ignoring of self, by making away with our own satisfactions and indulgences, and keeping up a tender interest in an object which does not directly concern ourselves. It is not only for the glory of God, but it is for His greater glory, and for His sole glory. It leads us to think purely of souls, which it is very difficult to do in this material world, and to think of them too, simply as spouses of Jesus. We thus gain a habit of mind which is fatal to the spirit of the world and to the tyranny of human respect, while it goes far to counteract the poison of self-love. The incessant thought of the Holy Souls keeps before us a continual image of suffering; and not of merely passive suffering, but of a joyful conformity to the will of God under it. Yet this is the very genius of the Gospel, the very atmosphere of holiness. Furthermore, it communicates to us as it were by sympathy the feelings of those Holy Souls, and so increases our trembling yet trustful devotion to the adorable purity of God; and as, except in the case of indulgences applied to the dead, it requires a state of grace to make satisfaction for the sins of others, it is a special act of the lay-priesthood of the members of Christ. The spirit of the devotion is one of pensiveness; and this is an antidote to frivolity and hardness, and tells wonderfully upon the affectionate character which belongs to high sanctity. And who can tell what will come, after patient years, of thus keeping constantly before our eyes a model of eagerness, unspeakable, patient eagerness, to be with

our dearest Lord? Oh, what a wonderful thing is the life of a fervent Catholic! It is almost omnipotent, almost omnipresent; because it is not so much he who lives as Christ who liveth in him! Oh what is it we are touching and handling every day of our lives, all so full of supernatural vigour, of secret unction, of divine force, and yet we consider not, but waste intentions and trifle time away in the midst of this stupendous supernatural system of grace, as unreflecting almost as a stone imbedded in the earth and borne round unconsciously in its impetuous revolutions, day by day.

It seems useless to enumerate the various ways in which we may practise this devotion. They are sufficiently known to Catholics, and to enter upon them at any length would require a volume by itself. The adorable Sacrifice and indulgences will of course always be the principal means of extending our charity to the Departed; and of indulgenced devotions I propose to speak at length elsewhere. It were to be wished that the beautiful devotion of setting apart the month of November for the Holy Souls, in the same way as we consecrate the month of Mary to our dearest Lady, could become naturalized among us, and of universal observance. There are hardly any devotions in the Church which so suit our character and feelings in this country, as those for the souls in purgatory. Only in all our practices let us remember, 1. what little faults good men will have to expiate, and 2. how long the process is, where there can be no merit to abridge it or enhance the value of sufferings.

But while the selection of particular practices may safely be left to the devotion of each one, something

should be said of the examples of the saints. On this subject they are, as might be expected, almost inexhaustible; neither am I going to burden you with many; but I should wish to illustrate and confirm the foregoing doctrine with the examples of holy persons. The Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great may be considered as the chief fountain of the devotion to the Holy Souls in all succeeding ages: and Father Peter Faber used to say that although St. Gregory was a Saint who should be loved and honoured on many accounts, yet on none more than this, because (I use his own words) he had so lucidly and transparently handed down to us the doctrine of the purgatorial fire. For he thought that if St. Gregory had not told us so many things of the Holy Souls, the devotion of subsequent ages would have been much colder in their behalf; and so, when he preached this devotion himself, he used to propagate along with it a special devotion to St. Gregory.

While devotions for the dead have characterized most of the Saints in a very special manner; for St. Thomas tells us that charity is incomplete until it includes the dead as well as the living; nevertheless, there have been certain holy persons whose lives seem almost to have been set aside by God, in sacrifices of the most supernatural kind for the souls in Purgatory. Sister Josefa de Santa Inez, Augustinianess of Beniganim, was one of these, and Sister Francesca, of Pampeluna, a Theresian nun, was another. They both seemed to live for that one object. They had continual communications with the departed souls. Their cells were often filled with them. That of Sister Inez was almost always set apart as the place of purgation for several. And in other respects also, the character of

the sanctity of these two religious was exceedingly similar. In the subject-matter of purgatory we may with the less scruple make use of such revelations, from the example of so grave an authority as Cardinal Bellarmine himself, who, in his treatise on purgatory, as I have already said, adds always some private revelations as a distinct head of proof. For many reasons, I have preferred to take my example from the life of Sister Marie Denise de Martignat, of the Visitation, who died in the Convent at Annecy, in 1653; and I will not apologize for the length of my narrative, because one example exhibited at length will illustrate the subject better than scores of shorter anecdotes.

At the time when Madlle. de Martignat left the French court for that of Charles Emmanuel at Turin, there was a lady living in that capital who went by the name of the Mère Antée. She had received a special attraction from the Holy Ghost to devote herself to the service of the souls in purgatory. She had now spent many years in this way, and forming an acquaintance with Madlle. de Martignat, she had obtained from God by her prayers, that Marie Denise should succeed her in her high office; and in fact her soul was the first which Marie Denise ever saw, coming out of Purgatory after a detention of five hours there for not following inspirations she had had about certain good works. The Mère Antée had told her she was ultimately to be a nun, as St. Francis of Sales had also hinted to her at Paris years before, and in due time it was arranged that she should join the convent of the Visitation at Annecy. She was accompanied on her journey by a multitude of the Holy Souls, whose

presence was so sensible to her that she never perceived the passage of the Mont Cenis, so absorbed was she in her intercourse with them. At the prayers of the Mère Antée, Marie Denise had received a powerful and mysterious grace, while praying before the Holy Winding Sheet at Turin, by which she had immense power over the souls in purgatory; and all her first years in Annecy were filled with practices on their behalf. They disclosed many things to her; as, for example, when she was infirmarian they told her there was no place where there were so many devils, or where they were so active, as in an infirmary, because it is there that the soul fights its last battle for eternity.

She was continually accompanied by them, and their presence was sensible to her. She told the Superioress that so far from being afraid, she was as much at her ease amid a troop of these souls as when with her sisters in community; and that she found more profit for her soul in conversation with them than with the living. She obtained as many indulgenced medals as she could, and at recreation she was always eloquently preaching this her favourite devotion. Her Superioress once expressed a wish to be visited by a soul from purgatory, if the visit would make her more humble and more acceptable to God. Marie Denise replied, "Truly, my dear mother, if such is your courage and your desire, let us pray our Lord to grant it you." The Superioress having consented, she was astonished that same evening at receiving a mysterious sign from a suffering soul, who from that moment became her frequent visitor. Several of the community slept in the Superioress's room, and were

eye and ear witnesses of these visits: and this continued for seven entire months. At the end of this time, Marie Denise told the Superioress that the continuance in the pains of purgatory, of such a soul as the one who had visited her, would teach her how much longer souls are detained in that suffering than she had supposed before; and this for four reasons; first, because of the inconceivable purity which the soul must have before it can present itself before Him who is essential sanctity and purity, and who receives no one into His glorious city who is not as pure as the city itself. Secondly, because of the innumerable multitude of venial faults which we commit in this life, and *the little penance which we do for the mortal sins we have confessed.* Thirdly, because of the inability of these souls to help themselves; and, fourthly, because of the lukewarmness and negligence of the greater part of Christians in praying and doing good works for these souls, as the dead fade from the memory of the living almost as soon as they have vanished from their eyes; while true charity will follow those it loves, through the flames of purgatory till the joys of Paradise.

The feast of our Lady of Angels was a day on which Marie Denise generally obtained the liberation of many souls from purgatory. Once after communion on that day, she felt a strong interior movement, as if our Lord was taking her soul out of her body, and leading her to the shore of purgatory. There He pointed out to her the soul of a powerful prince who had been killed in a duel, but to whom God had given the grace to make an act of contrition before he breathed his last; and she was ordered to pray for Him especially. She did this for nine years and three months, and even gave her

life in sacrifice for his soul, and yet he was not freed. She was so overcome by this vision of his soul, that the Superioress perceived that something extraordinary had happened to her. She related the vision, and added, "Yes, my dear mother! I have seen that soul in purgatory; but, alas! who shall deliver it? Perhaps it will not come out till the day of judgment. Oh, my mother!" she continued, weeping, "how good is God in His justice! How has this prince followed the spirit of the world and the lights of the flesh! How little anxiety has he had for his soul, and how little devotion in the use of the sacraments!" The effect of this vision, and of her penances for this soul, had such an effect on her bodily health, that the Superioress remonstrated with her on the subject; but she replied, that she must now suffer incessantly, as she had offered herself to God in order to procure some alleviation of pain for that poor soul. "And yet, my dear mother, I am not so much moved at the lamentable state of suffering in which I have seen his soul, as I am struck with wonder at the blessed moment of grace which accomplished his salvation. That happy instant seems to me an outflow of the infinity of God's goodness, sweetness, and love. The action in which he died, deserved hell. It was no attention to God on his own part which won from heaven that precious moment of grace. It was an effect of the communion of saints, by the participation which he had in the prayers that were made for him. The Divine Omnipotence lovingly allowed itself to be turned by some good soul, and in that grace acted beyond its wont. Ah! my dear mother! henceforth we must teach all the world to beg of God, our Blessed Lady, and the saints, that final in-

stant of grace and mercy for the hour of death, and also to pave the way for it by good works; because though our Lord may sometimes derogate from His ordinary providence, we must never presume on that privilege in our own case. There were many fights in Israel, but the sun never stood still except for Josue, nor went back except for Ezekias. A million souls have been lost in the very action in which the prince was saved. He had but one instant of life in the free possession of his mind, in order to co-operate with the precious moment of grace; that moment inspired him with a real contrition, which enabled him to make an act of true final repentance." The Superioress objecting to this view, the good sister answered, "My dear mother! as the prince had not lost the faith, he was like a match ready to take fire; so that when the spark of merciful grace touched the Christian centre of his soul, the fire of charity was kindled, and brought forth a saving act. God made use of the instinct which we naturally have to invoke our First Cause, when we are in urgent peril of losing the life which we hold from Him; and thus He touched the prince, and drew him to have recourse to efficacious grace. Divine grace is more active than we can even conceive. We cannot wink our eyes as quickly as God can do His work in the soul where He seeks co-operation; and the moment in which the soul makes its act of co-operation with grace is almost as brief as the one in which it receives it; and in this the soul experiences how admirably it has been created in the image and likeness of God." The Superioress seeing into what mysterious depths Marie Denise was about to plunge, interrupted her by remarking, that God had busied Himself forty years with the children

of Israel, and even then they were not converted from their evil ways. True, my dear mother, replied the sister, but then He swore in His wrath that His hardened people should not enter into His rest. Victorious grace only required a moment to strike down St. Paul, and to triumph over his heart. The judgments and conduct of God are abysses, which it does not belong to us to fathom; but of one thing I can assure you, that if it had not been for that one blessed moment of grace, the soul of the prince would have descended into the lowest hell; and since the devil has been a devil, he has, perhaps, never been more disappointed in his expectation than in losing that prey. For he had known nothing of the interior occupation of his victim in those few seconds which the Divine Goodness accorded him after his mortal wound."

Language almost fails to describe the sufferings both of mind and body which Mary Denise went through for the alleviation of this soul. Mère de Chaugy devotes a whole chapter to them, and they are quite equal to those which are read of any of the saints. After a long martyrdom of this kind, it pleased God that she should see in a vision the suffering soul of the prince, slightly raised above the bottom of the burning abyss, and in a capacity of being delivered somewhat before the day of judgment, and also that an abbreviation of *some few hours* of his purgatory had been granted. She begged Mother de Châtel to pray for him; and that good mother, consenting to do so, could not refrain from expressing her surprise that Marie Denise had only spoken of an abridgment of a few hours; but the sister replied, "Ah! my mother, it is a great thing that the Divine Mercy has begun to allow itself to be influenced;

time has not the same measure in the other life which it has in this; years of sadness, weariness, poverty, and severe illnesses in this world are not to be compared with the one single hour of the sufferings of the poor souls in purgatory!" It would take me too long to relate all the communications our Lord vouchsafed to make to her about the state of that soul. It came at last to this, that she offered her life for his simple alleviation, not deliverance, and it was accepted. Not long before her death, when the superioress was expressing herself to the effect that surely by this time the soul was free, Marie Denise said, with great warmth, "O mother! many years and many suffrages are needed yet;" and at last she died, and yet there was no word that the prince was delivered even by that heroic sacrifice crowning upward of nine years of suffering, prayers, masses, communions, and indulgences, not on her part only, but through her on the part of many others also. What a long commentary might be written upon all this! But hearts that love God will comment on it for themselves. Blessed be His most glorious Majesty for its insatiable purity.

One word more. Among the sorrows of kind hearts there is one which seems as if it grew greater in each succeeding generation of the world. It is the enormous growth of poverty and wretchedness, and our own inability to relieve it. There is hardly one among us who has not felt this. So overwhelming is the misery, that those who have little to give feel the pain as much as those who have nothing, and those who have much to give almost more. For giving opens a man's heart, and makes him love to give, and those who have more to give know best how little it is compared with the

necessity. Yet, this yearning to give alms comes from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and it must be satisfied; and how can we better satisfy it than by giving alms to those who need it most, the Holy Souls in Purgatory? And we can all do this. And how much might we do, even for our dear poor on earth, if we commended their cause to the souls whom God allows us to liberate, and made a sweet bargain with them that when once in the free air of heaven, their first homage and salutation over, they should pray for an abundant outpouring of grace upon rich men, that their hearts might be opened like the hearts of the first Christians, to deny themselves, and to feast the poor of Christ?

This doctrine of purgatory, and the marvellous powers put into the hands of devotion for the Holy Souls, prove more than any thing else how God has contrived all things for love, all things to show love of us, all things to win for Himself His creatures' love. No less does the neglect of this devotion illustrate the ingratitude and waywardness with which we repay God's love, and which is as wonderful as that love itself. How touchingly beautiful was the description which God vouchsafed to give of Himself, and His pursuit of souls, to St. Gertrude! "Just as a poor invalid," said He, "who cannot walk, having with difficulty got himself carried into the sunshine, to be a little cheered by the warmth, sees a storm come on suddenly, and has to wait, patient but disappointed, for bright skies again,—so am I. My love for you conquers Me, and compels Me to choose to dwell with you amid the violent tempest of your sins, hoping for the calm of your amendment, and for the quiet harbour of your humility at last." Well may we cry out with St. Catherine of Genoa, "O Lord!

if I could but know the cause of Thy so great and pure love of rational creatures! But our Lord answered her, "My love is infinite, and I cannot help loving what I have created. The cause of My love is nothing but love itself; and seeing you cannot understand it, be at peace; and do not seek what you will never find! Whereupon the saint exclaimed, "O Love! he who feels you understands you not, and he who wishes to understand you cannot know you!"

I should only be repeating what I have already said elsewhere, if I were to draw out in detail the various ways in which this devotion promotes our three ends, the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the salvation of souls. In fact, the peculiarity of this devotion is its fulness. It is all quickened with supernatural life and power. It teems with doctrine. It reaches everywhere, and has to do with every thing. We are always touching some hidden spring in it, which goes further than we intended, and effects more than we hoped. It is as if all the threads of God's glory were gathered up into it and fastened there, and that when one is touched, all vibrate, and make melody to God, part of that sweet song which the Sacred Human Heart of Jesus is singing ever, in the Bosom of the most compassionate Trinity.



A LETTER

To the Members of the Confraternity

OF THE

Most Precious Blood.

BY

F. W. FABER, PRIEST OF THE ORATORY.

My Dear Friends:

1. The Confraternity of the Most Precious Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, established in the Chapel of the London Oratory, now numbers not far from seven thousand members. The time, therefore, is passed, when the Director of the Confraternity could meet the few hundreds who then composed it, at the Friday evening gatherings at the Oratory; though it will not be easy to forget the fervour and joy which reigned at those unions, or the manner in which the whole assembly joined aloud in the prayers for the intentions of the Confraternity. It seems then natural that I should now address a few words to the Members in a way which may reach them all, lest as we extend more widely, we should forget the first spirit of our institute, and lose in zeal what we gain in numbers. Our simple object is to make our dearest Lord better

known and better loved; to have His Precious Blood worshipped with a more tender, affectionate, and thankful adoration; and to unite ourselves to the intentions of His Sacred Heart, the Fountain of that Blood, for the conversion of perishing sinners. Allow me, then, my dear friends and fellow-labourers, to say a few words to you in all love, to quicken your zeal and fervour, and to keep you true to one idea with which we were all unanimously possessed in the beginning of our undertaking.

2. The original idea of the Confraternity was, that it should be exclusively *an association of prayer*. No money collections were to be made in connection with it. No committees, or sub-committees, or collectors were to be necessary or even possible in it. No external work of charity or benevolence was to be grafted upon it. For all these good ends there are already societies and confraternities, all of which may God abundantly bless and prosper! But we were to keep to prayer; we were to have an exclusively spiritual end, and we were jealously to exclude all other ends, lest they should at last come to swallow up our one solitary but dearly cherished practice of intercessory prayer. To introduce other practices into the Confraternity will be, not to extend its usefulness, but to destroy its primitive idea. I beg of you to keep close to this. Value nothing in the Confraternity so much as its simplicity, its undivided attention to the spirit of intercession and prayer. Thus you will avoid trespassing on the ground already well occupied by other holy Confraternities: you will keep clear of the little troubles and disquiets which the collecting of money even for pious purposes is sure to bring about; and you will

be free also of the distractions which external works of active charity must necessarily gather round you. Confraternities established for these ends have their special benediction, that these things should not harm them. We, remember, are blessed simply as an association of intercessory prayer. This is our work, our life, our specialty, our power.

3. The first practice which we took upon ourselves in our Friday meetings in London, was an engagement to choose three souls; first and foremost, some bad, non-practising Catholic; secondly, some heretic or unbeliever; and thirdly, some soul in purgatory: and to let the mercy of God have no rest from our importunity until He had answered our prayers, brought our bad Catholic to the Sacraments, and converted our unbeliever. We add to these two some soul in purgatory, in order that we might not lose heart, and intermit our prayers, if, for our sins or in His secret judgments, the Most High delayed or refused our petitions in the other cases; for we knew that our prayers for the Holy souls, delayed from the vision of God, would, if not infallibly, yet more readily be heard; for they, true spouses of Jesus, could themselves put no obstacle in the way. This was our first practice, and it embodied the whole spirit of our Confraternity.

4. Why should we so greatly value and esteem this spirit and this practice? Because, dear brethren, God has so remarkably blessed them. It is a very solemn thing to receive a special blessing from Almighty God. It is almost a frightening thing when He opens heaven and lets the light of His loving-kindness shine visibly upon ourselves; it is frightening, from the very greatness of the consolation, and from the opposite conside-

ration of our own unspeakable unworthiness. I assure you I have sometimes felt quite nervous, as week after week we were called upon to read, at the Friday meetings, the numerous letters recording the wonderful and speedy answers which God had vouchsafed to our prayers. They who have been in the habit of attending those meetings know well how seldom it is that a week passes over without some letter of this sort; and more often they range from six to a dozen. A Protestant lady who has been kind to Catholics in these unkind days, but who never exhibited any other leaning toward our holy religion, is prayed for at the Confraternity at the request of one whom she has benefited. This is on the Friday evening; on the Sunday afternoon she sends for a priest to her sick-bed, and is reconciled to God. Again—a niece requests the prayers of the Confraternity for a sick aunt, who is lying insensible at the time. Shortly she awakens from her insensibility, asks for a priest, and has no sooner received the Sacraments than she becomes insensible again. These are but specimens of a large class of graces accorded to the prayers of the Confraternity; and it is observable, as if in sanction of the spirit with which we started, that by far the greater proportion of them are cases of the conversions of bad Catholics. Surely we ought to lay these things up in our hearts, and show our gratitude to God by increased diligence in a more joyful perseverance in prayer. Again I say, Let us be true to our first idea, and who shall say where the outpourings of God's mercies may end? Let us ask more and we shall receive more. Let us be bold in prayer, knowing assuredly that what we ask is nothing else than the burning desire of the loving

heart of Jesus Himself, the conversion of sinners for whom He shed His precious Blood.

5. Some Branch Associations of our Confraternity have been established by several parish priests in their parishes. Nothing is necessary, in order that the members of these should enjoy the indulgences granted to our Confraternity, but that the names of the members should be sent here for enrolment. It is very much to be desired that the members of such associations should keep true to the end of the institute, and so not in any way interfere with the operation of other confraternities in their parish, that they may rather be a bond of peace than even a possible and innocent occasion of disunion. It need hardly be said that in such associations all the good works of the parish, and the intentions of the pastor, should be always included in the intentions of the prayers, as well as local scandals, if there be any. Neither should members of the Confraternity meet together at all without the knowledge and sanction of their pastors; but they should be not only ready, but anxious, to receive his suggestions, to put away their own lights for his, and go his road rather than their own. The prayers of the self-willed can have no benediction, except when grace moves such men to pray for their own conversion.

6. As some inquiries have been made as to the prayers used at the Friday meetings in London, it may be well to mention them here, not of course as a rule to others, but as a suggestion. We begin our meetings with the hymn "Daily, daily," p. 85 of the Oratory Hymn Book: then follow the indulgenced offerings of the Precious Blood, p. 27 of the Confraternity Book; the notices, letters, requests for prayers and

thanksgivings are then read, and these occupy sometimes a quarter of an hour. After this, seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Maries are said by the whole assembly for the intentions just read, each Our Father and Hail Mary being prefaced by the words, "In honour of the (First, Second, &c.) Blood Shedding." Another hymn is then sung; St. Philip's Converts, p. 95, or Hail, Holy Joseph, p. 35 of our Hymn Book. Then follows the sermon, on some subject connected with the Precious Blood, the mysteries of Jesus and Mary, the conversion of sinners, or an account of some famous confraternity or work of charity in Catholic countries, or some intelligence about the labours of missionaries, and the propagation of the faith. At the conclusion of the Sermon, the Hymn of the Precious Blood, p. 18, is sung, and the meeting concludes with one Our Father and Hail Mary for the sick, sorrowing, and absent members of the Confraternity. These meetings have been found, not only to keep up the spirit and fervour of the members, but to have been greatly blessed to their own sanctification and more frequent attendance on the sacraments. We have learned to value them very greatly as seasons of more than common grace.

7. And now having pointed out, to you especially who reside at a distance, what was the spirit and idea of our Confraternity at first, I may be allowed, dear brethren, to recommend an object to your notice, and for your future prayers, which I have long had greatly at heart. The Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass is the life of the Catholic Church, and the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is the earthly paradise of all her loving Children. Yet whose heart, if he but loves God, does not bleed over the sad ingratitude of men in these

respects? What multitudes of poor Catholics are there among us who do not hear Mass even on days of obligation! What multitudes that hear it inattentively and indevoutly! What multitudes that for the least pretext stay away from benediction, because it is not of precept! Now, let us suppose that the seven thousand members of the Confraternity give themselves up to this work; let them besiege heaven with their prayers; let them remember it at mass, at communion, at rosary, at benediction, at examen of conscience, always and everywhere. Oh my dear friends! from what we know of God, and have experienced of His boundless compassion, is it an extravagance to believe that each member of the Confraternity may, by his prayers, at least win seven who now neglect to come to mass, and that within a year? And if so, what a work is this,—seven times seven thousand worshippers brought back to the foot of the altars of the Church! It is impossible to overrate the importance of this work. Those whose toil lies in the deep places of the Church, the crowded haunts of the English and Irish poor, know well, that in the Adorable Sacrifice is their only power; and that, if the people could be brought within the blessed sound of the mass-bell, the great work of conversion would be as good as done. Once more—why should not you, children and worshippers of the Precious Blood! take this object upon yourselves as a great end of your prayers? You will pray: and God will touch the hearts of the neglectful, or He will raise up Confraternities and bands of visitors to go out and compel the people with an affectionate compulsion to come to this Blessed Sacrifice, or He will send missions here and there that shall do the work. You have simply to

give yourselves to prayer. Meditate on this, and see if it be not an object worthy of your chief attention as members of the Confraternity. The Saints of God would have wept tears of holy bitterness over the multitudes who now neglect the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass.

8. But if we are to pray for others, we must first sanctify ourselves. If we are to make Jesus better known and better loved among men, we must know Him well, and love Him ardently ourselves. If we are to spread devotion to the Precious Blood, and bring many souls into its healing streams, it must be with our own souls ever glistening with fresh drops of constantly frequented Sacraments. My dear Brothers and Sisters! If you think what we are, and what God is, you will see that it is a solemn thing that has happened to you in the wonderful, and still more, (for it is not God's common way,) the *quick* answers to your prayers. God has not made use of you for nothing. He has but blessed you to-day that He may more abundantly bless you to-morrow. We have found a vein of gold in the Church of God: these early benedictions are, depend upon it, but the first fruits of what is yet to come, if we continue but to toil, with the utmost humility, and the lowliest opinion of ourselves, yet, with such bold confidence as humility alone can give, in this little vineyard of the Confraternity of the Precious Blood.

F. W. Faber,
Priest of the Oratory and Director of the Confraternity.

The London Oratory,
Feast of St. Ursula, 1853.

THE END.